



# **ACT Budget: Opens Some Doors and Closes Others**

Analysis of the ACT Budget 2009 / 10

Part 1 of 3

Media Releases

May 2009

[www.youthcoalition.net](http://www.youthcoalition.net)

The Youth Coalition of the ACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional owners and continuing custodians of the lands of the ACT and we pay our respects to the Elders, families and ancestors.

We acknowledge that the effect of forced removal of Indigenous children from their families as well as past racist policies and actions continues today.

We acknowledge that the Indigenous people hold distinctive rights as the original people of modern day Australia including the right to a distinct status and culture, self-determination and land. The Youth Coalition of the ACT celebrates Ngunnawal culture and the invaluable contribution it makes to our community.

The Youth Coalition of the ACT (Youth Coalition) is the peak youth affairs body in the Australian Capital Territory and is responsible for representing the interests of people aged between 12 and 25 years of age and those who work with them. The Youth Coalition works to actively promote the well being and aspirations of young people in the ACT with particular respect to their political, cultural, economic and social development. The Youth Coalition is represented on many ACT advisory structures and provides advice to the ACT Government on a range of issues related to young people and youth services. For more information phone the Youth Coalition on (02) 6247 3540 or email [info@youthcoalition.net](mailto:info@youthcoalition.net)

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Thank you to the Youth Coalition team for their support.

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# ACT Budget: Opens Some Doors and Closes Others

## Analysis of the ACT Budget 2009 / 10

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The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, acknowledges the challenges faced by the ACT Government in developing the ACT Budget 2009 / 10 in light of the current economic crisis, and welcomes the announcement of funding for some key initiatives.

However, despite ACT Government assurances to the ACT community that there would be no cuts to services through the Budget 2009 / 10 critical services have in fact been cut by cessation of funding through the Community Inclusion Fund. These include the highly successful Indigenous Numeracy and Literacy Program at the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation, and the drop-in service at the Multicultural Youth Service. The loss of these services will further isolate some of Canberra's most marginalised young people in an economic environment where risk factors are increasing for all members of the community.

The ACT Budget 2009 / 10 contains a number of promising gains for young people, with a particular focus on infrastructure. The Budget features a number of new initiatives for young people aimed at improving access to housing, health services, sport and recreation facilities in regional areas that are in need of investment.

Several key initiatives have been funded which are outlined below.

### *Young People in Care:*

- \$11 million over four years to support young Canberrans in out of home care.

### *Youth Participation and Engagement:*

- \$20,000 to enable the Youth Advisory Council to provide an ongoing program of consultation with young people; and
- funding for community engagement coordination and activities.

### *Health:*

- Feasibility study into the establishment of a Centre for Adolescent Health;
- Working towards the integrated prevention of chronic disease;
- A Healthy Future Prevention Health program, including a \$200,000 per annum program to reduce tobacco use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and \$500,000 per annum for a Chlamydia awareness campaign;
- Health workforce development;
- GP workforce initiatives;
- A range of mental health initiatives including:
  - \$2 million in 2009 – 10 to be split 50/50 between government and community services with a focus on psychosocial support;
  - The establishment of a Mental Health Assessment Unit (MHAU);
  - provision of mental health training for police, emergency services workers and teachers; and
  - The expansion the ACT Forensic Mental Health Court Liaison Team.

### *Homelessness:*

- \$10 million over 5 years, providing 20 additional properties to house homeless families and provide them with the necessary supports to sustain their tenancies;

- \$898,000 over 4 years for an initiative to address chronic homelessness (rough sleepers) who will receive community outreach to assist them in to housing and to maintain that housing;
- \$948,000 over 4 years to support for public housing tenants through a targeted program to assist vulnerable families, youth and older people, and Indigenous families to sustain their tenancies and break cycles of homelessness;
- \$1.113 million over 3 years for a *Foyer Model* to establish a service for young people aged 16 to 25 to maintain stable housing and engage with education and employment services;
- \$1.2 million over 4 years for housing and accommodation support initiatives to provide support for people with mental health issues and disorders requiring accommodation support to participate in the community and maintain successful tenancies;
- \$497,000 over 4 years for a central homelessness intake service as a centralised access point for housing and homelessness and would include a common waiting list for public and community housing;
- \$100,000 to support victims of domestic violence: to establish a program to enable women and children who are victims of domestic violence to retain their housing; and
- \$292,000 over 4 years to expand the existing stairwell model program by 10 places, and provide exit points from homelessness services with support in public housing.

The Youth Coalition is concerned about the confusion with regard to funding of existing homelessness services, and calls for clarification around their funding levels, particularly in light of an expectation of increased demand on these services as a result of tough economic times. The Youth Coalition reiterates its calls on the ACT Government to develop a new *Youth Homelessness Action Plan* in order to build on the successful collaboration between the ACT Government and the community and youth sectors of the previous Plan, which expired at the end of 2008.

While the promising new spending initiatives are welcomed, much of the detail is still to come. We implore the ACT Government to take the opportunity to conduct significant consultations with young people and community youth services to identify the best ways in which these resources can be utilised in the Canberra to benefit young people.

#### *Youth Sector Viability:*

- The short and long term viability of the youth and community sector has again not been addressed in the Budget 2009 / 10. In particular, the reduced indexation for community services from the expected 3.5% to 3.15% puts community sector jobs at risk when demand for services is increasing daily.
- The service system set up to support young people must be viable to address existing and emerging need and to provide targeted support. The Youth Coalition, in it's submission to the 2009 / 10 Budget called for the following key actions;
  - Urgent consideration of each of the 30 recommendations outlined in the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) report, *Finding Solutions: Towards the long term viability of the ACT Community Sector*, and;
  - Recognition of reported increase in demand and unmet need by increasing the Youth Services Program funding by 25%.

The Youth Coalition supports the ACT Government's commitment to review community sector contracts over the next 18 months to ensure that staff wages and conditions are adequate. Additionally, the review will seek to develop a funding strategy to address identified needs.

Youth and community sector organisations cannot continue to deliver high quality programs and services with staff shortages, high turnovers and an inability to attract suitably qualified or experienced workers.

*Infrastructure:*

- Funding for regional infrastructure including upgrades to Eddison Park, Black Mountain Peninsular and Weston Park;
- The development of a Gungahlin Sports Complex, Gungahlin College Precinct, and initial planning for a Leisure Centre;
- Child and Family Centre in West Belconnen, with a focus on Indigenous families; and
- A health centre in Belconnen.

The Youth Coalition is pleased that the ACT Budget 2009 / 10 addresses some gaps in services, with significant spending commitments, and we look forward to working with the ACT Government and other community stakeholders in implementing the initiatives from this budget that relate to young people and youth services.

The Youth Coalition of the ACT's ACT Budget 2009 / 10 Analysis is divided into three parts:

- Part 1: Media Releases (this document)
- Part 2: Expenditure Initiatives
- Part 3: Capital Initiatives

Each part can be downloaded from [www.youthcoalition.net](http://www.youthcoalition.net) or accessed in hardcopy by calling (02) 6247 3540.

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

**No 1**

**5 May 2009**

## **ACT Budget and Young People**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, acknowledges the challenges faced by the ACT Government in developing the 2009 / 10 ACT Budget in light of the current economic crisis, and welcomes many of the new initiatives.

However, despite ACT Government's public assurance that no services would not be cut, critical services have in fact been cut by cessation of funding through the Community Inclusion Fund. These include the highly successful Indigenous Numeracy and Literacy Program at the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation, and the drop-in service at the Multicultural Youth Service.

"The loss of these services will further marginalise some of Canberra's young people in an economic environment where risk factors are increasing for all members of the community." said Director Emma Robertson.

The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government for:

- An additional \$11 million over four years to support young Canberrans in out of home care;
- \$500,000 per annum for a Chlamydia awareness campaign;
- Funding to a range of mental health initiatives including \$2 million in 2009 / 10 to be split 50/50 between government and community services, with a focus on psychosocial support;
- Funding to new service initiatives in the area of homelessness, such as \$10 million over 5 years to provide 20 additional properties to house homeless families and provide them with the necessary supports to sustain their tenancies;
- Funding for regional infrastructure including the development of a Gunghalin Sports Complex, Gunghalin College Precinct, and initial planning for a Leisure Centre; and
- \$20,000 to enable the Youth Advisory Council to provide an ongoing program of consultation with young people.

"While the promising new spending initiatives are welcomed, much of the detail is still to come particularly in the area of homelessness."

"We call on the ACT Government to conduct significant consultation with young people and youth services to identify the best ways in which these resources can be utilised."

"Again, the short and long term viability of the youth and community sector has also not been addressed. We are particularly concerned about the impact of the reduced indexation rate for youth and community services."

”Youth and community services cannot continue to deliver high quality programs and services with staff shortages, high turnovers and an inability to attract suitably qualified or experienced workers.”

“We look forward to working with the ACT Government on the further development of these initiatives.”

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

**No 2**

**5 May 2009**

## **Growth in Out of Home Care Costs**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, applauds the ACT Government's Budget commitment of an additional \$4 million in 2009/10 towards addressing the increase in the number and cost of children and young people in out of home care arrangements.

The Youth Coalition believes that every young person in care has a right to be safe and to actively participate in decision making that affects their lives, and to be fully supported in the care system.

The CREATE Transitioning From Care Report (2008) identified significant improvements that need to be made to support young people to transition from care, including:

- Early commencement of transition planning (at 15 years);
- Continuity of support until the young person reaches 25;
- Better integration between departments to support young people;
- Planning in collaboration with young people and carers (youth participation);
- Addressing the high representation of Indigenous young people in care;
- Support for acquisition of life skills.
- 

"In 2007 there were about 500 young Canberrans in care, which was up from 173 in 1997." said Emma Robertson, Director of the Youth Coalition.

"Some key issues for young people in care include relocation, continuity of care, disruption of key connections (friends, family, significant others), poorer educational outcomes, poorer physical and mental health."

"We hope this funding will seek to address these and other issues affecting young people in the out-of-home care system in the ACT."

"Historically, the ACT is the poorest performer of all governments in providing support for young people leaving foster care. According to a CREATE Foundation national report, the ACT provides the shortest period of support for young people leaving foster care in Australia."

"The ACT Government funds a range of non-government agencies to provide support to young people who are transitioning from out of home. We understand that the ACT Government provides financial and other help on a case by case basis after the age of 18."

"We therefore strongly support the provision of funding to seek to address the increasing numbers of young people in out of home care arrangements. The CREATE Foundation has stated that the ACT needs mechanisms to monitor



objectives, compliance with standards, and outcomes for young people."

"We look forward to working with the ACT Government to utilise the evidence base to identify the best ways in which these resources can be accessed by young people and rolled out in consultation with young people, families, carers and youth services."

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

No 3

5 May 2009

## **A Roof Over Their Heads to Weather Tough Times? The Youth Foyer Model**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, is pleased to see that housing and services for young people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness are on the agenda of the ACT Government Budget 2009/10.

The Budget delivered some promising initiatives for young people and it is particularly good to see funding attached for support services in addition to the big boost in funding for bricks and mortar as a result of the federal stimulus package.

"The ACT Government seeks to explore models such as the *Foyer Model and Street to Home*. We welcome further funding, however the ACT Government needs to consult with young people and youth services to ensure these proposed models are appropriate for our jurisdiction," said Director, Emma Robertson.

"A Youth Foyer Model is a youth specific housing option that provides young people with support to complete their education and become established in employment."

"The Youth Coalition strongly supports the provision of transitional housing with integrated support for young people aged 16 – 25 years. However we don't necessarily support the Foyer Model in itself, which is evidenced by our homelessness research."

"We note that this initiative will not be funded until the 2010 – 2011 budget. This therefore gives the ACT Government time to consult and work with young people and the community youth sector to identify the best model to be implemented in the ACT."

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## MEDIA RELEASE

# Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis

No 4

5 May 2009

## A Roof Over Their Heads to Weather Tough Times?

### Rough Sleepers and the Street to Home Model

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, is pleased to see that housing and services for young people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness are on the agenda of the ACT Government Budget 2009/10.

The Budget delivered some promising initiatives for young people and it is particularly good to see some funding attached for support services in addition to the big boost in funding for bricks and mortar as a result of the federal stimulus package.

'Young rough sleepers' are young people experiencing primary homelessness, which means they have no conventional accommodation. This includes people living on the streets and in other public places, such as parks.

"Rough sleeping is a circumstance and not a category of homeless people. Most people experiencing homelessness are moving between tenuous and temporary forms of accommodation and are not rough sleeping. Some young people only sleep rough for very brief periods of time," said Director, Emma Robertson.

"It is important to note that the Australian Government White Paper on Homelessness calls for caution regarding the over emphasis of rough sleeping. Homelessness is a complex issue that requires individualised holistic responses."

"Most young people in the ACT experience secondary and tertiary homelessness. We therefore look forward to finding out how this initiative, though not youth specific but having a particular focus on young people, will be rolled out to ensure it meets the needs of young people. The Adelaide based *Street to Home* program can provide us with guidance on moving this initiative forward for young people."

"Initiatives which will explore models such as 'Street to Home' are welcomed on the understanding that more work needs to be undertaken to ensure that these resources are utilised in the best way to benefit young people in Canberra."

"We therefore call on the ACT Government to conduct significant consultations with young people and community youth services to identify the best ways in which these resources can be utilised in Canberra to benefit young people who are experiencing homelessness."

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

**No 5**

**5 May 2009**

## **A Roof Over Their Heads to Weather Tough Times?**

### **A Plan to Take Action on Youth Homelessness**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, is pleased to see that housing and services for young people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness are on the agenda of the ACT Government Budget 2009/10.

The Youth Coalition is concerned, however, about the confusion with regard to funding of existing homelessness services, and calls for clarification around their funding levels, particularly in light of an expectation of increased demand on these services as a result of tough economic times.

"The Youth Coalition Budget Submission called on the ACT Government to develop a new Youth Homelessness Action Plan in order to build on the highly successful collaboration between the ACT Government, community and youth sectors on the previous Plan which expired at the end of 2008," said Director, Emma Robertson.

"We believe that with the significant changes to homelessness funding agreements between the ACT and Australian Governments, injections of capital funding in the area of housing, and economic circumstances, there is an urgent need to link service provision to an updated Youth Homelessness Action Plan."

"We look forward to having further discussions with the ACT Government in regards to the detail of the housing/homelessness initiatives and linking these with an overarching strategic direction."

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

No 6

5 May 2009

### **Doors Close for Young Refugees**

Despite promises that there would be no cuts to services in the ACT Government's 2009/10 Budget a number of key youth organisations are facing closures to parts of their services as a result of the cessation the Community Inclusion Fund.

One such organisation is Multicultural Youth Services (MYS), Canberra's only youth specific service in the ACT for refugee, newly arrived and multicultural young people.

This is the fifth budget in which the Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, has called on the ACT Government to provide recurrent funding for MYS. The Community Inclusion Fund currently funds \$80,000 to MYS to provide essential services to multicultural young people in the ACT. This funding ceases in June 2009, which will result in the closure of the MYS drop-in service.

Multicultural young people and their families, as well as other mainstream and multicultural services, rely on being able to access, work with and refer to MYS. The service has three youth workers who on average have 63 young people in their client load, thus demonstrating the demand for service and the unsustainable workload.

"MYS is a specialised organisation with a high degree of organisational knowledge and skills in working with multicultural young people. MYS has been repeatedly recognised for their practice and importance, winning an ACT Early Intervention Award (2006), an ACTCOSS Diversity Award (2008) and a Yogie Award for Excellence in Organisational Practice (2008)," said Director Emma Robertson.

"The closure of this service will result in a significant gap in service provision and the loss of support to multicultural young people, whom the ACT Government has stated its strong commitment to and acknowledges as a particularly vulnerable group in our community."

"The Youth Coalition calls on the ACT Government to urgently address this significant gap in funding and ensure the continuation of essential support such as case management, drop-in, brokerage and resettlement assistance for refugee, newly arrived and multicultural young people."

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

No 7

5 May 2009

### **Widening the Gap: Cuts to Indigenous Young People's Education**

While the Youth Coalition is pleased with the ACT Government 2009/10 Budget announcement of funding to enhance literacy and numeracy for young people, we are extremely disappointed that 4% of this funding could not be used to support the continued engagement of a teacher at the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation.

"The Youth Coalition has been calling for a meagre amount of funding to support the Indigenous *Numeracy and Literacy Program* at Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation for several years. For many Indigenous young people, participation in education is affected by economic disadvantage, social marginalisation, health problems and isolation," said Director Emma Robertson.

"Gugan Gulwan's *Numeracy and Literacy Program* has been running successfully for a number of years with resources from the *Community Inclusion Fund* which provided a teacher 2 days a week. The program has provided literacy and numeracy skills development to meet to the needs of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who would otherwise not be able to complete studies successfully at a mainstream schooling institution."

"A recent external evaluation of the program found it is of high quality and makes a valuable contribution to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the ACT. The Youth Coalition supports the recommendation that calls for the program to be provided with ongoing funding through local pools to ensure its sustainability into the future. Continued funding will enable a teacher and education activities to continue to be provided to Indigenous young people."

"With the *Community Inclusion Fund* ceasing in June 2009, the *Numeracy and Literacy Program* will discontinue in 56 days, resulting in the subsequent disengagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from the education system that has been supporting them."

The ACT Government has repeatedly stated its commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to achieve their potential. Despite this, statistics in a wide range of studies reveal that, even with encouraging signs towards slowing or reversing these trends, the education gap remains one of the most critical problems facing Aboriginal people in Australia.

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

No 8

5 May 2009

### **One Step Forward, Two Steps Back**

While the Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak youth affairs body, welcomed new spending initiatives for young people in the ACT Government's 2009/10 Budget, again the short and long term viability of the youth and community sector has not been addressed.

The service system that supports young people must be viable and able to further develop to address emerging issues and provide targeted support. The Youth Coalition, in its submission to the 2009/10 Budget called for the following key actions:

- Urgent consideration of each of the 30 recommendations outlined in the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) report, *Finding Solutions: Towards the long term viability of the ACT Community Sector*, and;
- Recognition of reported increase in demand and unmet need by increasing the Youth Services Program funding by 25%.

The Youth Coalition supports the ACT Government's commitment to review community sector contracts over the next 18 months to ensure that staff wages and conditions are adequate. Additionally, the review will seek to develop a funding strategy to address identified needs.

"Youth and community sector organisations cannot be expected to deliver high quality programs and services with staff shortages, high turnovers and an inability to attract suitably qualified or experienced workers." said Director Emma Robertson.

"The Youth Coalition is also very concerned about the drop in the indexation level for community sector funding agreements announced in this week's budget."

"The expected increase in demand for support from youth and community services as a result of economic downturn will place increased pressure on youth service providers who are trying to keep jobs and to provide adequate wages and conditions."

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

**No 9**

**5 May 2009**

### **Continued Investment in Mental Health**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, is encouraged to see increased funding for mental health initiatives in the ACT Government Budget 2009/10.

“The Youth Coalition strongly supports additional funding being allocated towards both Government and non-Government services to provide mental health services for young people and their families. We particularly support the funding of community based psychosocial support services, and mental health training for police, emergency workers and teachers,” said Director Emma Robertson.

“The ACT Government has also committed to allocate funding to address the increasing demand for mental health services, establish a Mental Health Assessment Unit to improve access to mental health services, and expand the ACT Magistrate’s Courts Forensic Mental Health Court Liaison Team.”

“It is important that these initiatives also include youth-specific strategies, in line with the *Draft ACT Mental Health Services Plan 2008 – 2013*, which recognises young people aged 12 – 25 as a key target group.”

“According to the Mental Health Council of Australia, 70% of mental health issues manifest between the ages of 15 and 25. Mental health issues are likely to affect more than one quarter of young people aged 18 – 25 in any given 12 month period.”

“It is vital that these initiatives are further developed in collaboration and consultation with young people, youth service providers and other key stakeholders in the ACT, to ensure that mental health services meet the specific needs of young people.”

“It is also important that the needs of family members and significant others, particularly children of parents with mental health issues and young carers, are also considered.”

“The Youth Coalition looks forward to participating in further consultations to progress these important initiatives.”

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

**No 10**

**5 May 2009**

### **Increased Resources for Chlamydia Awareness**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, is pleased to see that youth sexual health education is funded in the ACT Government Budget 2009/10.

The ACT Government has committed to delivering a \$500,000 per annum investment towards a 'Chlamydia Awareness' campaign.

"Chlamydia is the most common Sexually Transmitted Infection affecting young people, with its rate of occurrence rising by 20% each year since 1998. Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT reports that Chlamydia affects 1 in 14 young people. However, because Chlamydia is asymptomatic, it is likely many more cases are undiagnosed," said Director Emma Robertson.

"The Youth Coalition's 2009/10 Budget Submission called for increased resources for targeted education and prevention of Chlamydia for young people, and we are pleased this has been funded by the ACT Government."

"It is important that we build on recent successful initiatives, including the 18-month 'Stamp Out Chlamydia' pilot project, and the subsequent 'Consider This' project, that aimed to increase testing for, and awareness of Chlamydia. The success of these projects is based in the partnership between the Academic Unit of Internal Medicine at the Australian National University, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT and the involvement of five tertiary education campuses in the ACT."

"The Youth Coalition looks forward to participating in further consultations on how this funding will be rolled out and build on the significant work that has already been conducted in the ACT."

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

No 11

5 May 2009

## **Opportunity to Align Health Services for Young People**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, welcomes the announcement of increased funding for health initiatives in the ACT Government Budget 2009/10.

The ACT Government has committed to undertaking a number of initiatives related to the provision of health services in the ACT. These include:

- Undertaking a feasibility study into the establishment of a Centre for Adolescent Health;
- Working towards the integrated prevention of chronic disease;
- Establishing the *Healthy Future Prevention Health Program*, including a program to reduce tobacco use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Health workforce development; and,
- A GP workforce initiative.

“The Youth Coalition welcomes the development of health initiatives, particularly those targeted to meet the specific health needs of young people in our community. Of particular importance is the feasibility study into the establishment of a Centre for Adolescent Health,” said Director Emma Robertson.

“This provides an exciting opportunity to align health services across the community, and it is hoped that this Centre will provide leadership for the progression of youth health in the ACT.”

“The announcement of further workforce training and development for health professionals also provides a timely opportunity for the ACT Government to further develop the quality of existing health services provided to young people.”

“In further developing these initiatives, it is important that the ACT Government develop closer linkages and consult with young people, existing youth health service providers with specific expertise on the unique needs of young people; the broader youth sector and other key stakeholders.”

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

**No 12**

**5 May 2009**

### **Youth Advisory Council Further Supported**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, commends the work of the members of the ACT Youth Advisory Council and the ACT Government's commitment to recurrent funding for consultations with young people on issues that affect them.

"The contributions of the young people engaged in the Council have proven invaluable to the development of Government policy. We congratulate the ACT Government for providing specific funding for the engagement of young people," said Director Emma Robertson.

"Youth participation strategies aim to ensure young people are engaged in, and supported to be involved in, decision-making that impacts on their lives - and the ACT Youth Advisory Council is one way in which the ACT Government can implement this. Young people have a right to participate in developing government policy, programs and services. We support the refunding of the Youth Advisory Council to facilitate consultations with young people in the ACT – and reiterate the importance of ensuring the Council is appropriately supported to implement their work plan.

"Youth participation can be difficult to achieve and requires strategies that ensure meaningful participation that is beneficial to young people. Youth participation must be adequately resourced, supported, and young people acknowledged for their time, expertise and contributions."

"It is imperative that alternative participation strategies are developed and implemented to ensure the engagement of diverse young people in the ACT, including those who are experiencing disadvantage and consumers of youth services. A comprehensive youth participation strategy needs to be inclusive of young people's diverse experiences and backgrounds."

"Given this, it is important that the ACT Government does not view or treat the Youth Advisory Council as the panacea for youth participation across the whole-of-government. We look forward to working with the Youth Advisory Council and the ACT Government to develop further strategies, particularly in light of the current development of the new *Young People's Plan*."

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Youth Coalition 2009/10 Budget Analysis**

**No 13**

**5 May 2009**

### **First Impressions: A Budget for the Times: Opens Some New Doors and Closes Others**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, acknowledges the challenges faced by the ACT Government in developing this year's budget and welcomes many of new initiatives funded within it.

"We strongly support the increased funding for young people involved in the out-of-home care system. This has been a long been an area in need of greater resourcing and we commend the ACT Government on recognising this with a \$4 million increase in investment in 2009/10," said Director Emma Robertson.

"We welcome the investment in housing and homelessness, particularly since these resources will build upon both infrastructure and support services. This area of need was highlighted in the Youth Coalition of the ACT's Budget Submission."

"We are also encouraged by the funding of initiatives for early intervention and prevention in the areas of chronic disease and adolescent health."

"However, we are very concerned that the *Community Inclusion Fund* has ceased and additional funding does not seem to be reflected in this Budget."

"This means that two services that are essential to some of Canberra's most marginalised young people will cease in 56 days on 30 June 2009. These include Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation's teacher for their Literacy and Numeracy program, and the Multicultural Youth Service's drop-in service."

"The ACT Government has said this is a budget for the times, however as part of this we expect that more members of the Canberra community will be accessing youth and community services and it is imperative that this demand is met with increased resources."

*The Youth Coalition of the ACT will be writing a full analysis of the ACT Budget 2009/10 and is available for comment.*

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**