



Submission to the *Draft ACT Multicultural
Strategy 2010 - 2013*

November 2009

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 Indigenous cultures and the invaluable contribution they make to our community.

Submission to the *Draft ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010 - 2013*
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Thank you to the Youth Coalition staff team for their support.

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1. Introduction

Section 1 of this submission provides contextual information about Youth Coalition of the ACT (Youth Coalition), the process why which this submission was develop, an overview of the Multicultural Youth Affairs Network, and an overview of multicultural young people in the ACT.

1.1 Youth Coalition of the ACT

The Youth Coalition of the ACT 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.

1.2 Process for Developing and Format of this Submission

The Youth Coalition welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *Draft ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010 - 2013* (the Strategy). We would like to congratulate the ACT Government on its commitment to progressing the multicultural affairs through the development of the Strategy.

This submission is based on the following:

- The priority areas highlighted in the *Youth Coalition Strategic Plan 2007-10*;
- The policy positions outlined in the *Youth Coalition Policy Platform*;
- The views of participants of the Youth Coalition's Biennial Policy Forum;
- The issues raised at the Multicultural Youth Affairs Network consultation on the first draft of the Strategy;
- The issues raised at the Multicultural Youth Affairs Network consultation on the second draft of the Strategy;
- The issues raised at consultations on the *2010-11 ACT Government Budget*;
- The issues raised at consultation on the *ACT Young People's Plan 2009-2014*;
- Previous Youth Coalition submissions to the ACT Government;
- One-on-one consultations with member services and organisations; and,
- Current and topical research on youth affairs.

This submission has been divided into 7 sections, which include the following:

1. Introduction (this section)
2. Summary of recommendations
3. Framework of the Strategy
4. Focus Areas of the Strategy
5. Governance of the Strategy

- 6. Conclusion
- 7. References

This submission represents an opportunity for the Youth Coalition and stakeholders to identify and advise ACT Government of emerging issues, areas in need of additional resources and collaboratively develop social policy in the ACT.

1.3 Multicultural Youth Affairs Network

The ACT Multicultural Youth Affairs Network (MYAN) began in July 2008, and seeks to improve supports for multicultural young people, strengthen multicultural youth services (locally and nationally), strengthen connections between 'mainstream' and multicultural youth services and raise the profile of issues affecting multicultural young people in the ACT.

Currently, over 70 cross-sectoral individuals from government and non-government services are members of MYAN. Although unfunded, MYAN has made significant achievements including:

- Training with youth workers (August 2008);
- Planning Day (August 2008);
- Newsletters (September 2008 and December 2008);
- Network meeting, focusing on Sudanese young people (November 2008);
- Participation in the Youth Coalition's ACT Budget 2009-10 Submission process (December 2008 – February 2009);
- Network consultation to discuss the first draft Strategy (March 2009);
- A survey of stakeholders on the first draft Strategy (March 2009);
- Event held during Refugee Week 2009, hosted by Amanda Bresnan MLA (June 2009); and,
- Network consultation to discuss the second draft Strategy (October 2009).

1.4 Multicultural Young People in the ACT

Cultural diversity is a proud and prominent feature of Canberra. It was recently estimated that 32 700 people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds live in Canberra.¹ Almost 14% of young people in the ACT were born overseas, and over 6,500 young people speak languages other than English at home.² Since 2005, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of people aged under 30 years settling in Australia, accounting for approximately 43% of the total number of people settling in Australia.³

These young people may have been exposed to extreme poverty, conflict and violence in their country of origin, and many will have spent time in transit in other countries or in refugee camps where life is unpredictable, physically difficult and sometimes violent.⁴

The impact of these experiences, including significant effects on psychological wellbeing, family relationships, and on adapting to a new environment, will continue for young people as they are settling in the ACT. These experiences are further complicated by the fact that they may also experience similar issues to other young people, such as homelessness; poor health; lack of education, employment and recreational opportunities; and conflict in family and peer relationships.⁵

Limited multicultural and settlement services are available in the ACT. Community consultations for the *Draft ACT Multicultural Strategy 2006 - 2009* (the current

Strategy) found that young refugees and newly arrived young people have specific needs and are particularly affected by settlement, and identified the lack of programs to support young people.⁶

The ACT Government has stated that all migrants should be able to gain access to targeted essential services and programs; and committed to providing the full range of essential settlement services, such as housing, transport, education, work experience programs, counselling and orientation assistance for newly arrived migrants.⁷

The ACT Government's 2008 election commitments relating to multicultural young people included:

- Funding a campaign in the multicultural community to reduce community stigma associated with mental health issues experienced by young people;
- Funding a program to assist refugees in the community with living skills;
- Funding a campaign to increase awareness of consumer protection among multicultural youth to reduce exploitation and debt levels;
- Funding an orientation program for multicultural young people to learn about Australia's legal system with an emphasis on road use; and,
- Establishing a program to assist young multicultural women to understand their identity in the context of a cross-cultural environment.⁸

2. Summary of Recommendations

Section 2 provides a summary of the recommendations this submission makes to the further development and implementation of the Strategy. It is vital that these recommendations be referred to in the context of the broader submission.

Recommendation 1

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* reinstate the following strategies, which were included in the *Draft ACT Multicultural Strategy 2009 – 2012* and were ACT Government election commitments in 2008:

- Funding a campaign in the multicultural community to reduce community stigma associated with mental health issues experienced by young people;
- An orientation program on Australia's legal system for multicultural young people;
- A campaign to increase awareness of consumer protection among multicultural young people;
- A program to assist refugees (including young people) with living skills;
- Increasing numeracy and literacy education programs for new arrivals;
- A program to assist multicultural young women.

Recommendation 2

That *Focus Area 2: Children and Young People* of the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* ensure strategies are appropriate and specific to children (0-12 years), and young people (12 – 25 years).

Recommendation 3

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010 – 2013* is based upon the principles of: human rights, equity and access, participation and representation, integration, early intervention and prevention, evidence-based, and responsive and accountable.

Recommendation 4

That the ACT Government seek to consult with key stakeholders (including community-based multicultural services) to develop effective strategies for participation and representation by multicultural communities, including young people, in the further development and implementation of the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013*.

Recommendation 5

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* seek to develop synergies with other key ACT Government strategies and plans, and include a policy matrix of relevant local and national strategies, plans and initiatives.

Recommendation 6

That the ACT Government release the report from the Multicultural Youth Summit 2007 and incorporate its findings into the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013*.

Recommendation 7

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include mapping information on specific services and supports that currently exist in the ACT to support multicultural communities, including multicultural young people, in order to identify priority areas and opportunities.

Recommendation 8

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include a definition of 'multicultural' in relation to its context in the ACT community.

Recommendation 9

That if the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* clearly articulate whether it includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are included in this Strategy, additional and significant strategies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be developed in consultation with key stakeholders and communities.

Recommendation 10

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* define young people as aged 12 – 25 years, in line with the ACT Government's definition of young people.

Recommendation 11

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* clearly state its target groups and how they will be accountable and supported to implement the Strategy.

Recommendation 12

That the ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013 include three additional columns:

- Timeframe for all strategies;
- Allocation of funding for all strategies; and,
- Clear and appropriate outcomes / indicators for each strategy.

Recommendation 13

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* develop strategies that are appropriate and specific to sub-groups within the multicultural community, including emerging communities (such as the Burmese community).

Recommendation 14

That *Focus Area 1: Languages* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs and services are currently being provided to support multicultural communities, including young people, to learn English and further develop numeracy and literacy skills.

Recommendation 15

That in light of the changes to education and employment requirements for young people, the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific strategies to support multicultural young people to further develop numeracy and literacy skills.

Recommendation 16

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 1: Languages*.

Recommendation 17

That *Focus Area 2: Children and Young People* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs and services are currently being provided to support multicultural young people in the ACT.

Recommendation 18

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific strategies to support multicultural young people experiencing alcohol and other drug issues.

Recommendation 19

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* ensure that strategies to improve accessibility of services consider the wide range of barriers that young people may experience, including but not limited to: geographic location of services, affordability, limitations of public transport, and the capacity of workers and service to meet the specific needs of multicultural young people.

Recommendation 20

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* recognise Multicultural Youth Services as a key support service to multicultural young people in the ACT, and develop strategies to support the provision of this service.

Recommendation 21

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* clearly articulate what existing mechanisms will be used to consult with multicultural children and young people.

Recommendation 22

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* develop additional strategies to support multicultural young people to participate in the Canberra community; addressing key barriers such as: numeracy and literacy, employment and education opportunities, public transport, cost of living, health, wellbeing and housing.

Recommendation 23

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* ensure that strategies implemented to support the mental health of young people include specific provisions to meet the particular needs of multicultural young people.

Recommendation 24

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 2: Children and Young People*.

Recommendation 25

That *Focus Area 4: Women* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs and services are currently being provided to support multicultural women, including young women, in the ACT.

Recommendation 26

That *Focus Area 4: Women* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* reinstate its commitment to establish a program to support young women.

Recommendation 27

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 4: Women*.

Recommendation 28

That *Focus Area 5: Refugees and Asylum Seekers* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs and services are currently being provided to support refugees and asylum seekers, including young people, in the ACT.

Recommendation 29

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 5: Refugees and Asylum Seekers*.

Recommendation 30

That *Focus Area 6: Tradition, Heritage and Religious Acceptance* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs, services and activities are currently being provided to support traditions, heritage and religious acceptance of multicultural communities in the ACT.

Recommendation 31

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include strategies to address racism against multicultural communities, including young people.

Recommendation 32

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 6: Traditions, Heritage and Religious Acceptance*.

Recommendation 33

That the ACT Government establish a inter-departmental and community committee to drive the implementation and evaluation of the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013*.

Recommendation 34

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include a clear monitoring, reporting and evaluation framework.

Recommendation 35

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include a timeframe and workplan by which to develop the following ACT Multicultural Strategy in 2014.

3. Framework of the Strategy

Section 3 of this submission outlines the Youth Coalition's response to some of the key changes in the Strategy, principles underpinning the Strategy, key definitions, the target group, the evidence base and the Strategy's implementation plan.

3.1 Key Changes in the Second Draft of the Strategy

The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government for providing a second opportunity to input into the development of the Strategy, and acknowledges the significant amount of work that has gone into the development of the Strategy by the Office for Multicultural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS).

In particular, the Youth Coalition is pleased that the second draft Strategy has included the following components (each of these components will also be discussed in further detail throughout Section 3 of this submission):

- Information on the achievements and progress of the current Strategy;
- An ACT policy context;
- Additional information on reporting requirements for the Strategy; and,
- An Implementation Plan with clear strategies and delegated responsibilities.

However, the Youth Coalition is concerned that some strategies that were in the first draft of the Strategy have not been included in the second draft of the Strategy. Specifically, these include:

- Funding a campaign in the multicultural community to reduce community stigma associated with mental health issues experienced by young people;
- Funding an orientation program to assist multicultural youth to understand Australia's legal system, with an emphasis on road use in the program (pg 17 of the first draft of the Strategy);
- Funding a campaign to increase awareness of consumer protection among multicultural youth to reduce exploitation and debt levels (pg 16 of the first draft of the Strategy);
- Funding a program to assist refugees in our community – including young people – with living skills (pg 16 of the first draft of the Strategy);
- Committing to increasing literacy and numeracy education programs for new arrivals (pg 17 of the first draft of the Strategy); and,
- Establishing a program to assist young women to understand their identity in the context of a cross-cultural environment (pg 17 of the first draft of the Strategy).

It should also be noted that these strategies were election commitments of the ACT Government in 2008. Please see Recommendation 1 on the next page.

Recommendation 1

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* reinstate the following strategies, which were included in the *Draft ACT Multicultural Strategy 2009 – 2012* and were ACT Government election commitments in 2008:

- Funding a campaign in the multicultural community to reduce community stigma associated with mental health issues experienced by young people;
- An orientation program on Australia's legal system for multicultural young people;
- A campaign to increase awareness of consumer protection among multicultural young people;
- A program to assist refugees (including young people) with living skills;
- Increasing numeracy and literacy education programs for new arrivals;
- A program to assist multicultural young women.

Additionally, the Youth Coalition notes the merging of children and young people as a focus area in the Strategy. Children (aged 0 – 12 years) and young people (aged 12 – 25 years) are two discrete groups who experience unique issues. This is reflected by the ACT Government through the development of different ACT Government plans for children and young people: *The ACT Children's Plan*, and the *ACT Young People's Plan 2009 – 2014*.

In developing actions to support multicultural children and young people, it is vital that the Strategy ensure actions are appropriate and specific to each age group, and the developmental stages evidenced within each of these groupings.

Recommendation 2

That *Focus Area 2: Children and Young People* of the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* ensure strategies are appropriate and specific to children (0-12 years), and young people (12 – 25 years).

3.2 Principles

It is unclear what the underpinning principles of the Strategy are. A number of the ACT Government plans and strategies that have been undergoing consultation and updating during 2009 include a set of core underpinning principles (such as the *Draft ACT Young People's Plan 2009 – 2014*).

The Youth Coalition recommends that the Strategy include the following underpinning principles:

- Human-rights based;
- Equity and access;
- Participation and representation;
- Integration;
- Early intervention and prevention;
- Evidence-based; and,
- Responsive and accountable.

Each of these principles is outlined in further detail below.

Recommendation 3

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010 – 2013* is based upon the principles of: human rights, equity and access, participation and representation, integration, early intervention and prevention, evidence-based, and responsive and accountable.

3.2.1 *Human Rights Based*

The Youth Coalition strongly supports the inclusion of human rights within all ACT Government policy. Under a human-rights based approach, the plans, policies and processes of the Strategy would be anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established and supported by both international and domestic law. The Australian Government's five priorities for human rights are:

- Promoting a strong, free democracy;
- Human rights education and awareness;
- Assisting disadvantaged groups to become more independent;
- Supporting the family, and,
- Promoting human rights internationally.⁹

If Australia's human rights policies are very strongly oriented towards achieving practical outcomes that improve the rights of individuals¹⁰, then ensuring that the Strategy is founded on a rights-based approach will echo the sentiment and priority areas of the Australian Government, and set a national benchmark.

The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government for taking leadership in Australia in being one of only two jurisdictions with its own Human Rights Act, incorporating provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights into ACT law, which the ACT Legislative Assembly adopted in 2004. The Youth Coalition calls for the ACT Government to further build on this by developing the Strategy within a human rights framework.

3.2.2 *Equity and Access*

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of equity and access as key principles underpinning the entire Strategy.

'Equity' in policy making, can be defined as the allocation of resources to ensure that all people have supports to access and seek equal outcomes. Many multicultural people, including young people, experience disadvantage due to a range of structural and systemic issues; and may require specific supports to access equal opportunities.

In further developing the Strategy, it is vital that the principles of equity and access are integrated into all aspects of its development, implementation and evaluation; in order to ensure that all multicultural people, including young people, have opportunities to seek equal outcomes.

3.2.3 *Participation and Representation*

The Youth Coalition strongly supports the inclusion of 'participation and representation' as a key principle underpinning the further development and implementation of the Strategy.

Providing opportunities for multicultural people, including young people, to participate in Government policy, programs and services that affect them is an important aspect of a representative and democratic society.¹¹ This is already acknowledged in the draft Strategy, and the ACT Government more broadly, through the inclusion of a commitment to build a 'child and youth friendly city'.¹² A 'child and youth friendly city' is one that 'promotes children and young people's active involvement in issues that affect them; listening to their views and taking them into consideration in decision-

making processes'.¹³

It is important to note that specific strategies and resources are required to ensure effective participation and representation by multicultural communities, including young people. In developing strategies to support the participation and representation of multicultural communities and young people, the ACT Government should consult with key stakeholders (such as community-based multicultural services) on the most effective means by which to do this.

Recommendation 4

That the ACT Government seek to consult with key stakeholders (including community-based multicultural services) to develop effective strategies for participation and representation by multicultural communities, including young people, in the further development and implementation of the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013*.

3.2.4 Integration

The discrete issues experienced by multicultural people, including young people, are becoming increasingly complex and interrelated. Key issues such as health (including mental health, alcohol and other drugs, safety and related health issues), housing, education, employment and family circumstances impact upon each other. Consequently, a holistic, integrated response is required to support multicultural communities and young people.

As a whole-of-ACT Government policy, the further development of the Strategy provides a key opportunity for the ACT Government to develop policy that builds upon this holistic, integrated approach. The Strategy should aim to develop synergies between other key strategies / plans, Government agencies, and sectors.

In order to develop effective whole-of-government policy, it is important that the Strategy develop synergies with other key ACT Government and national documents, and reflect an integrated approach in its further planning, development, implementation and evaluation. The *Draft ACT Young People's Plan 2009 – 2014* includes a policy matrix of ACT and national strategies, plans and frameworks that are relevant to its planning and implementation¹⁴. The Youth Coalition calls for the Strategy to include a similar policy matrix.

Related ACT Government strategies and documents include, but are not limited to:

- ACT Mental Health Services Plan 2008 – 2013, developed by Mental Health ACT, ACT Health, 2009;
- ACT Population Projections: For Suburbs and Districts 2007 – 2019, developed by the ACT Government;
- Caring for Carers Policy, developed by ACT Health;
- Children's and Young People's Justice Health Services Plan 2008 – 2012, developed by ACT Health, 2008;
- Draft ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Strategy 2009 – 2012, developed by ACT Health, 2009;
- Draft ACT Young People's Plan 2009 – 2014, developed by the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, DHCS, 2009
- Draft Building a Strong Foundation: A Framework for Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT 2009 – 2014, developed by Mental Health ACT, ACT Health, 2009;
- Draft Comorbidity Strategy, to be developed by ACT Health, 2009;

- Draft Managing the Risk of Suicide Two: A Suicide Prevention Strategy for the ACT 2009 – 2014, developed by Mental Health ACT, ACT Health, 2009; and,
- The ACT Children’s Plan, developed by the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support, DHCS, 2004.

Recommendation 5

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* seek to develop synergies with other key ACT Government strategies and plans, and include a policy matrix of relevant local and national strategies, plans and initiatives.

3.2.5 Early Intervention and Prevention

Early Intervention’, in policy-making, has been defined as ‘a strategy that enables individuals to gain assistance before the situation becomes chronic and denies them access to those possibilities the community takes for granted’.¹⁵

The concept of ‘prevention’, initially based on a medical model, was transposed to the social welfare arena using a model of ‘primary, secondary, and tertiary’ prevention. ‘Primary prevention’ may include education, while ‘secondary prevention’ focuses on early treatment. ‘Tertiary prevention’ is concerned with rehabilitation.¹⁶

In the 2005/06 ACT Government Budget, the ACT Government states:

*[Early intervention and prevention] provides important building blocks that develop resilience to, or skills to avoid, challenges that may be faced, particularly at key turning points and transitions in people’s lives. Government’s investment in early intervention also potentially avoids or reduces the need to direct significant amounts of public money in the future toward the lengthy and expensive support programs that are required to address serious and engrained problems.*¹⁷

The years 12 – 25 are a key developmental period for young people, and can be defined as ‘a period within the lifespan when most of the individual’s biological, cognitive, psychological and social characteristics are changing’¹⁸. Within this, there are several sub-developmental stages, including 12 – 14, 15 -19, and 20 – 25. For this reason, young people require specific early intervention and prevention strategies.

In light of this, it is important that the Strategy be further developed in consideration of early intervention and prevention principles (at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels) specifically for multicultural young people aged 12 – 25 years.

3.2.6 Evidence-Based

‘Evidence Based Policy Development’ is defined as being ‘based upon research that has undergone some form of quality assurance and scrutiny’.¹⁹ It is crucial that the ACT Government is committed to evidence based policy development. Governments are expected to develop policies, programs and projects based on clear evidence that link accurate information and rigorous analysis to proposed actions.

The Youth Coalition is concerned that the Strategy is not based upon a comprehensive evidence base that includes consultative mechanisms, service mapping, and broader evidence relating to issues for multicultural communities, including young people.

In 2007, the ACT Government held a successful consultation with young people on the development of multicultural youth affairs in the ACT – the Multicultural Youth Summit 2007 (the Summit). This consultation received positive feedback by participants and youth service providers; and was a significant and important method of engagement between young people, multicultural youth leaders and the ACT Government.

We understand that the ACT Government committed to issuing a report about the Summit. We also understand this report has not yet been released. The release of this report can function in two key ways, firstly to provide feedback to young people about the process and outcomes of their participation; and secondly, to help shape the Strategy. The Youth Coalition therefore calls on the ACT Government to release the report and incorporate its findings into the Strategy.

Additionally, the Strategy does not include any information on what services and supports already exist in the ACT to support multicultural communities, and how these could be built upon and strengthened during the life of the Strategy. This information would support the ACT Government to identify priority areas and opportunities, in order to progress multicultural affairs in an effective and meaningful way.

It is also important that the Strategy build in mechanisms by which to collect and analyse evidence relating to multicultural people in the ACT; to ensure that all future strategies, plans and programs (including the Multicultural Strategy in 2015) build on an up-to-date profile.

Recommendation 6

That the ACT Government release the report from the Multicultural Youth Summit 2007 and incorporate its findings into the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013*.

Recommendation 7

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include mapping information on specific services and supports that currently exist in the ACT to support multicultural communities, including multicultural young people, in order to identify priority areas and opportunities.

3.2.7 Responsive and Accountable

Effective policy development and implementation aligns with milestones and targets, and is able to respond rapidly to emerging challenges and changes of direction.²⁰ It is important that accountability underpins the further development, implementation and evaluation of the Strategy, while still ensuring the Strategy is responsive to emerging issues and needs of multicultural people, including young people, in the ACT.

Ensuring transparent, accountable and responsive processes will also work towards supporting multicultural people, including young people, to participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of the Strategy. Please see also Section 5.

3.3 Definitions

In order to ensure the Strategy is accessible and relevant, it should include key definitions relating to concepts outlined throughout the Strategy. Specifically, the Strategy should contain a definition of 'multicultural', in relation to its context in the ACT community.

Demographic information included in the Strategy in the section titled *Canberra – A Multicultural City*, provides information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If the Strategy is to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, additional and significant objectives and strategies need to be included, to seek to progress Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not intended to be part of this Strategy, this information should be removed from the Strategy.

The Youth Coalition notes that the definition of young people in the draft Strategy is inconsistent with the ACT Government and community definition of young people. The draft Strategy defines a young person according to the *Children and Young People Act 2008*, as being 12 – 17 years of age. The *Children and Young People Act 2008* discusses children and young people in a legislative and legal context, and therefore does not include young people aged 18 and over. However, the ACT Government's definition of a young person, as outlined in the *Draft ACT Young People's Plan 2009 – 2014* defines young people as aged 12 – 25 years of age. In light of this, the Strategy should adjust its definition of young people to be 12 – 25 years of age.

Recommendation 8

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include a definition of 'multicultural' in relation to its context in the ACT community.

Recommendation 9

That if the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* clearly articulate whether it includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are included in this Strategy, additional and significant strategies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be developed in consultation with key stakeholders and communities.

Recommendation 10

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* define young people as aged 12 – 25 years, in line with the ACT Government's definition of young people.

3.4 Target Group

The Youth Coalition believes that the Strategy should clearly state its target group. It is unclear whether the Strategy applies only to the ACT Government; or also to the community sector, the private sector, and broader communities.

It should also be noted that if the Strategy is to apply to the community sector, the private sector, and broader communities, information will need to be provided on how stakeholder groups will be accountable and supported to participate in the implementation of the Strategy.

Recommendation 11

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* clearly state its target groups and how they will be accountable and supported to implement the Strategy.

3.5 Implementation Plan

The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government for including an implementation plan in the second draft of the Strategy, which includes clear strategies and delegates responsibilities to government agencies.

However, we recommend that the implementation plan include three additional columns with the following information:

- Timeframe for all strategies;
- Allocation of funding for all strategies; and,
- Clear and appropriate outcomes / indicators for each strategy.

Please note that the implementation plan will be further discussed in Section 4 of this submission.

Recommendation 12

That the ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013 include three additional columns:

- Timeframe for all strategies;
- Allocation of funding for all strategies; and,
- Clear and appropriate outcomes / indicators for each strategy.

4. Focus Areas of the Strategy

Section 4 of this submission responds to the information and strategies provided in each of the focus areas in the Strategy. Please note that this submission will not comment on *Focus Area 3: Older People and Aged Care*, as it is not within the scope of the Youth Coalition's work.

4.1 General Comments on the Focus Areas

The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government for including an implementation plan in the Strategy, which includes clear strategies and delegates responsibilities to government agencies.

In addition to our recommendation in Section 3.5, the Youth Coalition believes it is important that each focus area in the Strategy contain provisions to be flexible in addressing new issues identified within the multicultural community, over the course of the Strategy. In addition, each focus area should aim to develop strategies that are appropriate and specific to sub-groups within the multicultural community, including emerging communities (such as the Burmese community).

Recommendation 13

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* develop strategies that are appropriate and specific to sub-groups within the multicultural community, including emerging communities (such as the Burmese community).

4.2 Focus Area 1: Languages

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of 'language' as a key focus area in the Strategy. Youth services working with multicultural young people have reported numeracy and literacy skills for multicultural young people as a key factor in being able to access further education and employment, and to participate meaningfully in the Canberra community.

4.2.1 *Introductory Information*

The introductory information provided in this focus area should include a comprehensive picture of what services and programs are currently being provided to support multicultural communities (including young people) to learn English and further develop numeracy and literacy skills. This information would enable the Strategy to build upon existing programs, and also to identify gaps in this area.

Recommendation 14

That *Focus Area 1: Languages* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs and services are currently being provided to support multicultural communities, including young people, to learn English and further develop numeracy and literacy skills.

4.2.2 *Strategies*

The Youth Coalition is concerned that the Strategy does not include a commitment to increasing numeracy and literacy programs for new arrivals, which was both an ACT Government election commitment in 2008, and included in the first draft of the Strategy. In light of the changes to education and employment requirements for

young people, which will require young people to complete Year 10 and then be in education or employment until the age of 17, the provision of numeracy and literacy supports for multicultural young people should be a key focus of the Strategy.

Recommendation 15

That in light of the changes to education and employment requirements for young people, the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific strategies to support multicultural young people to further develop numeracy and literacy skills.

4.2.3 Desired Outcomes

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of desired outcomes, to assess progress made through the implementation of the Strategy. However, we recommend that each strategy included in this focus area have a corresponding and measurable desired outcome. For example:

Strategy: Liaise with local universities to offer courses to up-skill teachers delivering languages programs in ACT public primary schools.

Desired outcomes:

- *Additional courses provided to students studying teaching within local universities to further develop their skills to provide languages programs within ACT public primary schools.*
- *Improved outcomes for ACT public primary school students participating in languages programs.*

Please see Section 3.5 for further information.

Recommendation 16

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 1: Languages*.

4.3 Focus Area 2: Children and Young People

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of 'Children and Young People' as a key focus area in the Strategy.

4.3.1 Introductory Information

As discussed in Section 3.3, the Youth Coalition notes that the definition of young people in the Strategy is inconsistent with the ACT Government and community definition of a young person. The draft Strategy defines a young person according to the *Children and Young People Act 2008*, as being 12 – 17 years of age. The *Children and Young People Act 2008* discusses children and young people in a legislative and legal context, and therefore does not include young people aged 18 and over. However, the ACT Government's definition of a young person, as outlined in the *ACT Young People's Plan 2009 – 2014* defines young people as aged 12 – 25 years of age. In light of this, the Strategy should adjust its definition of young people to be 12 – 25 years of age.

The introductory information provided in this focus area should include a comprehensive picture of what services and programs are currently being provided to support multicultural children and young people. This information would enable the Strategy to build upon existing programs, and also to identify gaps in this area.

Recommendation 17

That *Focus Area 2: Children and Young People* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs and services are currently being provided to support multicultural young people in the ACT.

4.3.2 Strategies

While the Youth Coalition supports the development of specific strategies to support multicultural children and young people, we have identified a number of concerns with the strategies outlined in the draft Strategy.

Across each of the objectives, it was noted that many strategies relate to all young people, but do not include strategies specifically tailored to support multicultural young people. Additionally, the Strategy does not include strategies that were included in both the first draft of the Strategy, and were ACT Government election commitments in 2008, including:

- Funding a campaign in the multicultural community to reduce community stigma associated with mental health issues experienced by young people;
- An orientation program on Australia's legal system for multicultural young people;
- A campaign to increase awareness of consumer protection among multicultural young people;
- A program to assist refugees (including young people) with living skills;
- Increasing numeracy and literacy education programs for new arrivals; and,
- A program to assist multicultural young women.

In light of the changes to education and employment requirements for young people, which will require young people to complete Year 10 and then be in education or employment until the age of 17, the Youth Coalition is concerned that this focus area does not include any strategies relating to education for multicultural young people.

Similarly, the Youth Coalition is concerned that the draft Strategy does not include any strategies in relation to alcohol and other drug issues for multicultural young people. Alcohol and other drug issues, along with mental health and housing and homelessness, are continually raised as one of the top three issues for young people in the ACT, including multicultural young people.

Recommendation 1

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* reinstate the following strategies, which were included in the *Draft ACT Multicultural Strategy 2009 – 2012* and were ACT Government election commitments in 2008:

- Funding a campaign in the multicultural community to reduce community stigma associated with mental health issues experienced by young people;
- An orientation program on Australia's legal system for multicultural young people;
- A campaign to increase awareness of consumer protection among multicultural young people;
- A program to assist refugees (including young people) with living skills;
- Increasing numeracy and literacy education programs for new arrivals;
- A program to assist multicultural young women.

Recommendation 18

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific strategies to support multicultural young people experiencing alcohol and other drug issues.

This submission will also respond to each of the objectives in this focus area below.

a) Objective 1: Services are accessible to children and young people from multicultural backgrounds.

The Youth Coalition is concerned that many of the strategies included in this objective do not aim to improve the accessibility of services. Young people may experience a number of barriers to accessing services that cannot be simplified to their awareness of services and programs. Barriers such as geographic location, affordability, limitations of public transport, as well as the capacity of workers and services to meet the specific needs of multicultural young people, are all factors affecting the accessibility of services.

Youth Coalition consultations, and the evidence base, indicate that a mixture of mainstream and specialist services for young people, including multicultural young people is desirable to ensure an accessible continuum of support. Community services, such as Multicultural Youth Services, have the unique capacity to be responsive to the specific needs of multicultural young people. The Youth Coalition is concerned that Multicultural Youth Services is not referenced in this section of the draft Strategy, as a key provider of support services to multicultural young people.

While the Youth Coalition supports the strategy in this objective to appropriately consult with children and young people, it is unclear what 'existing mechanisms' will be used. The Strategy should clearly articulate the mechanisms it will use to consult with children and young people, and ensure these seek to adequately and appropriately consult with multicultural children and young people.

Recommendation 19

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* ensure that strategies to improve accessibility of services consider the wide range of barriers that young people may experience, including but not limited to: geographic location of services, affordability, limitations of public transport, and the capacity of workers and service to meet the specific needs of multicultural young people.

Recommendation 20

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* recognise Multicultural Youth Services as a key support service to multicultural young people in the ACT, and develop strategies to support the provision of this service.

Recommendation 21

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* clearly articulate what existing mechanisms will be used to consult with multicultural children and young people.

b) Objective 2: Enhance social participation of young people from a multicultural background

While the Youth Coalition supports this objective, it requires more than two strategies. Social participation of multicultural young people in the Canberra community cannot only be representation on boards, panels and committees, but must also seek to address the broader barriers multicultural young people may experience to participation, such as: Numeracy and literacy, employment and education opportunities, public transport, cost of living, health, wellbeing and housing.

Recommendation 22

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* develop additional strategies to support multicultural young people to participate in the Canberra community; addressing key barriers such as: numeracy and literacy, employment and education opportunities, public transport, cost of living, health, wellbeing and housing.

c) Objective 3: Improve access to services which support the mental health of multicultural children and young people

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of strategies to support the mental health of multicultural children and young people. However, we are concerned that this objective includes strategies that have already been completed, or do not include provisions specifically to support multicultural young people (for example, a step-up/step-down service for young people, and a 'broad based social marketing campaign').

In addition, the Youth Coalition recommends that the previous commitment (outlined in the first draft of the Strategy, and as a 2008 ACT Government election commitment) to fund a campaign within the multicultural community to address stigma associated with mental health issues in young people, be reinstated in the Strategy.

Recommendation 23

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* ensure that strategies implemented to support the mental health of young people include specific provisions to meet the particular needs of multicultural young people.

4.3.3 *Desired Outcomes*

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of desired outcomes, to assess progress made through the implementation of the Strategy. However, we recommend that each strategy included in this focus area have a corresponding and measurable desired outcome. For example:

Strategy: Ensure young people who have multicultural backgrounds have a voice through the ACT Transcultural Mental Health Network.

Desired outcomes:

- *Increase in number of young people represented on the Transcultural Mental Health Network*
- *Improved mental health outcomes for young people with multicultural backgrounds.*

Please see Section 3.5 for further information.

Recommendation 24

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 2: Children and Young People*.

4.4 **Focus Area 4: Women**

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of 'women' as a key focus area in the Strategy, but notes that it should include specific information, strategies and outcomes relating to young women with multicultural backgrounds.

4.4.1 *Introductory information*

The Youth Coalition is concerned that the introductory information provided in this section is highly limited, and does not provide an adequate overview of multicultural women in the ACT.

The introductory information provided in this focus area should include a comprehensive picture of what services and programs are currently being provided to support multicultural women (including young women) in the ACT. This information would enable the Strategy to build upon existing programs, and also to identify gaps in this area.

Recommendation 25

That *Focus Area 4: Women* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs and services are currently being provided to support multicultural women, including young women, in the ACT.

4.4.2 *Strategies*

The Youth Coalition is concerned that draft Strategy contains no actions to support multicultural young women. Youth workers and services report that multicultural young women may experience a range of challenges, in addition to the challenges that may be experienced by all multicultural young people and communities. These particularly include health issues, family conflict and cross-cultural pressures.

The first draft of the Strategy included a commitment to establish a program to assist multicultural young women. This was also an ACT Government election commitment in 2008. The Youth Coalition recommends that the Strategy reinstate this commitment.

Recommendation 26

That *Focus Area 4: Women* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* reinstate its commitment to establish a program to support young women.

4.4.3 *Desired Outcomes*

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of desired outcomes, to assess progress made through the implementation of the Strategy. However, we recommend that each strategy included in this focus area have a corresponding and measurable desired outcome. For example:

Strategy: Ensure women from multicultural backgrounds have a voice through the ACT Transcultural Mental Health Network.

Desired outcomes:

- *Increase in number of multicultural women represented on the Transcultural Mental Health Network*
- *Improved mental health outcomes for women from multicultural backgrounds.*

Please see Section 3.5 for further information.

Recommendation 27

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 4: Women*.

4.5 Focus Area 5: Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of 'refugees and asylum seekers' as a key focus area in the Strategy.

4.5.1 Introductory information

The introductory information provided in this focus area should include a comprehensive picture of what services and programs are currently being provided to support refugees and asylum seekers in the ACT. This information would enable the Strategy to build upon existing programs, and also to identify gaps in this area.

Recommendation 28

That *Focus Area 5: Refugees and Asylum Seekers* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs and services are currently being provided to support refugees and asylum seekers, including young people, in the ACT.

4.5.2 Strategies

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of strategies in this focus area that aim to identify and progress the needs of young people who are refugees or asylum seekers.

The Youth Coalition's primary concern with this focus area is that it does not refer to supporting Multicultural Youth Services, as a key support service to young people with refugee backgrounds. While it is positive that the Strategy aims to promote youth centres to refugee young people, young people with refugee backgrounds may require very specific and specialist support services (see Section 4.3.2 for more information).

4.5.3 Desired Outcomes

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of desired outcomes, to assess progress made through the implementation of the Strategy. However, we recommend that each strategy included in this focus area have a corresponding and measurable desired outcome. For example:

Strategy: Continue to meet to assist with the identification of issues through the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian (RASH) Coordination Committee, including evidence based assessment of the needs of young people.

Desired outcomes:

- *Identification of the needs of refugee and asylum Seeker young people*
- *Assessment of methods used to identify needs of young people*
- *Strategies developed to seek to meet the needs of refugee and asylum seeker young people*

Please see Section 3.5 for further information.

Recommendation 29

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 5: Refugees and Asylum Seekers*.

4.6 Focus Area 6: Traditions, Heritage and Religious Acceptance

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of 'traditions, heritage and religious acceptance' as a key focus area in the Strategy, but notes the importance of ensuring that strategies to address racism should also be included in the Strategy.

4.6.2 Introductory information

The introductory information provided in this focus area should include a comprehensive picture of what services, programs and activities are currently being provided to support traditions, heritage and religious acceptance of multicultural communities in the ACT. This information would enable the Strategy to build upon existing programs, and also to identify gaps in this area.

Recommendation 30

That *Focus Area 6: Tradition, Heritage and Religious Acceptance* in the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include information on what programs, services and activities are currently being provided to support traditions, heritage and religious acceptance of multicultural communities in the ACT.

4.6.2 Strategies

The Youth Coalition notes that the Strategy should contain actions to address racism within the ACT community. Youth workers and services report that racism against multicultural young people is still prevalent within ACT schools.

Previously, the ACT developed a *Facing up to Racism Strategy*, which aimed to:

- Promote unity, respect and inclusiveness;
- Reduce issues of racism in schools;
- Undertake, promote and improve commitment to reconciliation;
- Strengthen anti-discrimination laws and offices;
- Eliminate and oppose unfair discrimination in employment;
- Improve multiculturalism; and,
- The media, its role and influence.²¹

As the *Facing up to Racism Strategy* has not been updated in 2009, it is important that these issues are reflected in the Strategy.

Recommendation 31

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include strategies to address racism against multicultural communities, including young people.

4.6.3 Desired Outcomes

The Youth Coalition supports the inclusion of desired outcomes, to assess progress made through the implementation of the Strategy. However, we recommend that each strategy included in this focus area have a corresponding and measurable desired outcome. For example:

Strategy: Work with tertiary institutions in Canberra to encourage the participation of international students in cultural events, such as the National Multicultural Festival.

Desired outcomes:

- *Meetings undertaken with local tertiary institutions and international students to identify possible collaborative activities to implement during the National Multicultural Festival*
- *Increased participation rate of international students in cultural events*

Please see Section 3.5 for further information.

Recommendation 32

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include specific desired outcomes for each strategy included in *Focus Area 6: Traditions, Heritage and Religious Acceptance*.

5. Governance of the Strategy

Section 5 of this submission responds to the accountability and reporting against the Strategy; and the need to include mechanisms to plan for the following Strategy in 2014.

5.1 Accountability and Reporting

The Commission on Human Rights identified the key attributes of 'good governance' as being:

- Transparency;
- Responsibility;
- Accountability;
- Participation; and,
- Responsiveness (to the needs of the people).²²

The Youth Coalition believes these attributes should be the key components in further developing the governance framework of the Strategy.

5.1.1 Inter-departmental and Community Committee

ACT Government strategies such as the *ACT Young People's Plan 2009 – 2014*, *ACT Women's Plan*, and the *Mental Health Services Plan*, have committed to establishing committees (with representation from the community sector) to ensure appropriate implementation, accountability and evaluation mechanisms.

In line with these other key ACT Government strategies and plans, the Youth Coalition recommends that an inter-departmental and community committee be established to participate in the implementation, reporting and evaluation of the Strategy. This would ensure that the Strategy remains a live document that can effectively progress multicultural affairs in the ACT.

It is crucial to ensure that participatory, consultative and feedback mechanisms are established to ensure that other key stakeholders, including multicultural young people, are supported to contribute to the further development, implementation and evaluation of the Strategy.

Recommendation 33

That the ACT Government establish a inter-departmental and community committee to drive the implementation and evaluation of the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013*.

5.1.2 Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Mechanisms

Monitoring and reporting mechanisms are crucial to the accountability, successful implementation and ownership of any plan or policy document. Monitoring mechanisms will assist in assessing the level and success of the implementation of various parts of the Plan and in measuring its progress.²³

Monitoring should identify obstacles and suggest suitable measures that would contribute to the continued implementation of the Strategy in the context of outcomes for multicultural communities, including young people.

The Youth Coalition supports the development of annual reports on the progress of the Strategy; and highlights the importance of including a variety of evaluation mechanisms, as part of the reporting process and the broader implementation of the Strategy. Beyond measuring desired outcomes, the Strategy should also seek to evaluate its own development and implementation processes, consultative mechanisms and governance arrangements; to ensure the Strategy continues to be relevant and effective.

Recommendation 34

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include a clear monitoring, reporting and evaluation framework.

5.2 Planning for the next Strategy in 2014

This year has seen a number of key ACT Government strategies and frameworks be updated, and the Youth Coalition is concerned that adequate processes are not in place to ensure continuity of implementation across each of these strategies and frameworks.

The development of this Strategy provides a key opportunity for the ACT Government to begin planning for the development of the next ACT Multicultural Strategy in 2014. As discussed in Section 5.1, a clear evaluation framework will support the ACT Government to work towards developing an effective Strategy in 2014.

In order to progress multicultural affairs through future priorities and action, the Strategy should include a timeframe and workplan by which to develop the following ACT Multicultural Strategy in 2014.

Recommendation 35

That the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* include a timeframe and workplan by which to develop the following ACT Multicultural Strategy in 2014.

6. Conclusion

The Youth Coalition would like to thank the ACT Government for providing this second opportunity to contribute to the further development of the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013*. We commend the commitment by the ACT Government to developing a Strategy based upon community consultation and key stakeholder feedback.

This submission identifies many opportunities by which the ACT Government can build upon the existing strengths of the Strategy. In particular, the Youth Coalition calls for the further development of the Strategy to reinstate commitments made in the first draft of the Strategy, and to provide specific outcomes for all strategies within the Strategy.

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