

The Young people in Canberra from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds make up a significant part of the population and make a significant contribution to the cultural richness of Canberra. Almost 14% of young people in the ACT were born overseas and over two-thirds of these young people came to Canberra from countries other than the main English speaking countries.¹ Over 6,500 young people in Canberra speak languages other than English at home.

While many migrant and refugee young people settle in Australia successfully, the Youth Coalition recognises that young people from certain cultural and linguistic backgrounds are at risk of alienation within our community.

Those who are particularly at risk include young people with poor English proficiency and young people experiencing cultural isolation and intolerance. Sometimes the process of settling in a new country is fraught with unexpected difficulties.

Barriers such as language, social isolation, racism and discrimination and lack of access to a range of services cause multiple disadvantages and can create a vulnerable group within society. In particular, experiences of racism can have strongly negative impacts on culturally and linguistically diverse young people. Kids Help Line reports that nationally, the rate of bullying calls from non-English speaking callers is higher than for other callers.

Stereotypes persisting in the broader community can also impact on young people's interactions with others, including professionals such as teachers, doctors and police.

The Youth Coalition commends programs and services that encourage the development and cultural identity of CALD young people. In order to best meet the needs of cultural groups it is essential that attitudes within our community reflect the complexity of our own diversity so that we can appreciate the richness of our multicultural society.

¹ ACT Government (2002) *Youth in the ACT: A Social and Demographic Profile* p16

The Youth Coalition is committed to:

- ◆ Advocating for increased support for young carers through the provision of respite services, in-home support, access to employment, family-based rehabilitation program and personal and emotional support.
 - ◆ Advocating for adequate ESL support in all Canberra schools, colleges and universities in order to remove barriers to education for migrants and refugees for whom English is a second language.
 - ◆ Ensuring that ACT schools, colleges and universities are free from racism, and racist bullying from teachers and students alike.
 - ◆ Advocating for all youth services such as youth centres, youth health, legal and accommodation services to be accessible, supportive, understanding of and responsive to migrant and refugee youth needs and issues.
 - ◆ Advocating for young refugees and migrants to have access to appropriate advocacy services to ensure their basic human rights are met in Canberra and that they may gain equitable access to and fair treatment from all community, private and government services in the ACT.
 - ◆ Advocating for appropriate counselling and trauma support for all young migrants and refugees.
 - ◆ Advocating for support services for migrant and refugee youth in accessing appropriate social, recreational and sporting activities that may benefit their well-being and assist them in creating social networks and supports,
 - ◆ Ensuring that migrant and refugee youth have their housing and accommodation needs met, especially those who are newly arrived,
 - ◆ Advocating for ACT policing and legal services and systems to deal sensitively and appropriately with migrant and refugee young people.
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