



Youth Coalition of the ACT
ANNUAL REPORT
2017-2018

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.

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About Youth Co

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the ACT. As a membership based organisation, the Youth Coalition is responsible for representing and promoting the rights, interests and wellbeing of the estimated 78,000 young Canberrans aged 12-25 years and those who work with them.

The activities of the Youth Coalition fall under four key themes: policy; sector development; advocacy and representation; and, projects that respond to ongoing and current issues.

A key role of the Youth Coalition is the development and analysis of ACT social policy and program decisions that affect 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.

President's Report

It has been a great honour and privilege to be sitting in the President's seat during 2017/18. I would like to acknowledge the dedicated, committed and professional work of the Youth Coalition staffing team. This year started out with some challenges and brought further change to the organisation, and everyone stepped up and took on extra responsibilities to continue delivering the valuable work that the Youth Coalition does. I would particularly like to thank Hannah Watts and Sharon Casey who used their extensive knowledge, skills and awareness to continue the organisation's valuable work when they found themselves down to a staff team of two.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members who have spent an extraordinary amount of their own personal time supporting the organisation and the initiatives of the Board throughout the past 12 months of change and transition. I especially would like to acknowledge the Executive Team including Ryan Harris, Suella Jarvis and Kieran Purves for helping support the staff team and recruitment of the new Executive Director, Justin Barker.

Justin has brought a whirlwind of ideas and new opportunities to the Youth Coalition since joining the team, including the new service improvement project, working with the staff team to develop a new strategic plan, increasing the staff team and facilitating the co-location of ACT Shelter at the Youth Coalition building, creating a hub of three peak bodies. The work of the Youth Coalition is expanding, and I look forward to watching the organisation grow further under Justin's leadership.

I'd also like to acknowledge the support of Will Mollison and Karen Hall from Families ACT. The continued partnership between our organisations is not just in shared office space, but also in a shared commitment to supporting each other, and the work of the community sector.

Finally, as I step down from my term as President, I'd like to affirm my continued belief in the value and importance of the Youth Coalition, as a peak body, and what it delivers to the community sector, to government, and to young people in the ACT. My understanding and appreciation of what it does has grown throughout my time on the Board, and I am confident in the Youth Coalition playing an important role in the sector for a long time to come.

Michelle Vaessen-McLean

President

October 2018

Director's Report

The 2017-18 financial year was a year of challenges, consolidation and change for the Youth Coalition. For much of this time, the Youth Coalition was under the stewardship of Hannah Watts, Sharon Casey and the Board, led by Michelle Vaessen-McLean. Hannah, Sharon and Michelle went above and beyond to ensure the Youth Coalition continued to fulfil its important role as the peak body for young people and youth affairs with a reduced staff team.

As the Acting Director, Hannah carried the organisation through these challenging times, and strengthened its reputation. Her impressive hard work and commitment steadfastly guided the Youth Coalition with grace and resolve. Moreover, she has been indispensable in supporting me, ensuring continuity and stability to the organisation in this transitional period. Her accumulated knowledge and reputation have been vital, and she continues to be a significant part of the Youth Coalition's personality and legacy.

Before I started in the role as Executive Director in February, several people spoke to me of the legend of Sharon Casey, our Business Manager. In a role that is always hard to define, as she can and does do anything required or suggested, Sharon has continued to hold up the often-unseen infrastructure of the Youth Coalition. Despite a year of incredible personal challenges for Sharon, she has maintained her delightful optimism and enthusiasm, and emerged stronger and more powerful than ever.

The Youth Coalition Board have risen to the governance challenges of the last year and supported the organisation and its staff with integrity, and a clear passion for this organisation, and the sector and young people it supports. All of the Board members have worked tirelessly to ensure the Youth Coalition has been able to continue to thrive. I extend my gratitude to all of the Board members for their leadership support. However, the outgoing members deserve special attention.

As the President, Michelle Vaessen-McLean has carried herself and the organisation with impressive integrity. Her drive to do what is in the best interests of the organisation and her commitment and resilience has been incredibly impressive. It is clear that the Youth Coalition would not be where it is today without her proactive support and her uncanny ability to always convey a sense of confidence about the future.

Alongside Michelle, Ryan Harris and Suella Jarvis similarly provided support to the Youth Coalition and staff that has fortified the organisation. Their hard work and resolve supported a culture of best practice.

The entire Board has clearly supported the Youth Coalition through challenging times. Ari, Kieran, Sarah, Sophie, Shaun and Katie all provided their own unique brand of support that has imbued a confidence and optimism into the organisation that is felt by the staff and other stakeholders.

Built on the hard work of those mentioned above, and still reliant on them, the second half of this financial year has seen a period of consolidation of purpose and culture. At the same time, we have been developing and implementing change in how the Youth Coalition and peak bodies can achieve their goals. We have seen and created opportunities for change.

The Youth Coalition exists to improve the lives of young people and support the services and people that work with them. We not only work for these people, but with them. We would like to thank the inspiring young people that inform, motivate and teach us. To the youth workers and services that directly support young people, we also extend our gratitude, for contributing to and participating in our ongoing work and activities, and informing our advocacy.

Dr Justin Barker
Executive Director
November 2018

Treasurer's Report

The Youth Coalition of the ACT achieved an overall operating surplus for the year totalling \$58,778, as compared to a total operating surplus for the 2017 year of \$37,927. The current year result represents an overall result improvement of \$20,851.

Total income for the year of \$475,470 represented a 18.5% decrease as compared to the 2017 year of \$604,030. Although we have increased our rental income in 2018, the decrement of the government grant funding was the main reason of the reduction of the overall income. Peak Body Funding was maintained, however, project grant funding decreased and the total funding reduced from 2017's \$548,769 to 2018's \$451,609.

Total expenditure for the year of \$416,692 represented a 23.6% decrease as compared to the 2017 year total of \$545,670. While we have the office renovation and equipment replacement this year, we achieved our cost saving on operating expenditures. Our operating expenses is reduced from 2017's 85k to 2018's 80k. Furthermore, a reduced number of staff and tighten control on staffing cost contributed significantly in our cost saving.

In conclusion, the overall 2018 surplus illustrates an improved result as compared to 2017.

The full audited financial report provides a full list of the Coalition's sources of funding and expenditure, and is available online at www.youthcoalition.net

Kevin Lu
Treasurer
October 2018

Youth Coalition Activities

Advocacy & Representation

The Youth Coalition provides advocacy and representation through a range of mechanisms, including meeting with ACT Ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and ACT Government Directorate representatives, and sitting on committees or reference groups.

Examples of the committees and groups that the Youth Coalition participated in this year include:

- ACT Peaks Network
- Community Services Industry Strategy Steering Group
- CYFSP Practice Leaders & Workforce Development & Training Subcommittee
- Future of Education Symposium Group
- Gambling & Racing Commission Advisory Committee
- headspace Consortium
- Joint Community Government Reference Group
- Joint Pathways
- Justice Reform Group
- Multicultural Matters Meeting
- Murrumbidgee Employment & Training Centre Training & Employment Committee
- Restorative Practice Network
- StandBy Support Service Reference Group
- The Way Back Support Service Stakeholder Reference Group
- Youth Justice Blueprint Taskforce
- National Youth Peaks Network
- National forums (including the National Youth Coalition for Housing, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, and Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia)

The Youth Coalition also has a presence in the media in the ACT, regularly providing comment on issues affecting young people and the youth sector, including:

- Housing & Homelessness
- Access and funding for mental health supports for young people
- Criminal age of responsibility
- Lowering the voting age
- Future of Education
- Lack of funding for national youth peak & need for a Federal Youth Minister
- Youth week & youth participation

Policy Development

The Youth Coalition is a key body for information about policy relating to young people in the ACT. As well as contributing to policy issues through our advocacy and representation work, the Youth Coalition develops policy submissions throughout the year in response to government actions and development. This year, the Youth Coalition developed submissions to the following processes:

- Submission to the ACT Budget 2018-19
- Analysis of the ACT Budget 2018-19 and appearance before the ACT Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Estimates 2018-19
- Future of Education Consultations
- ACT Public Transport Network Consultations
- Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill March 2018 Consultation
- Appearance before the ACT Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs for the Inquiry into the Extent, Nature and Consequence of Insecure Work in the ACT following written submission in June 2017

Copies of written submissions are published on our website once they are made available to the public by the ACT Legislative Assembly, and transcripts of public hearing appearances are available via the ACT Legislative Assembly Hansard website.

In addition to developing written submissions, the Youth Coalition provided critical advice and feedback on a range of policy issues, including:

- Youth Justice: Participated in Youth Justice Blueprint Taskforce, and provided advice to Justice and Community Safety Directorate regarding consultation processes with young people relating to the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime.
- Housing and Homelessness: Hosted a consultation regarding affordable housing for the ACT Housing Strategy, worked with the ACT SHIP Data Working Group to discuss improving data collection from homelessness services, participated in an ABS Homelessness data briefing, participated in a consultation regarding ACT Shelter's trauma-informed project, and attended the launch of the federal housing strategy campaign.
- Education: Worked with the Education Directorate to discuss the Continuum of Education and the potential role of a case work framework and practice framework.
- Health and Mental Health: Participated in a workshop to discuss ACT Health Community Based Health Services, participated in consultations on the design and purpose of the ACT Office for Mental Health, worked with the Capital Health Network to address the mental health needs of young people in the ACT.
- Domestic and family Violence (DFV): Worked with the Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety within Community Services Directorate to progress policy work related to DFV perpetrator interventions, participated in a consultation on early intervention with families affected by DFV, and further advisory meetings, as part of the Early Intervention by Design process.
- Working with Community Services Directorate to inform the Early Intervention By Design process.
- Worked with Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate to discuss red tape reduction and regulatory reform priorities for the youth sector.
- Worked with ACT peak bodies to discuss and progress the Community Services Industry Strategy.
- Worked with Families ACT to progress policy concerns relating to the need of children and young people aged 9-15 (middle years).
- Provided ACT representation on issues of national concern, including meeting with Senator Jordan Steele-John regarding the federal budget, and proposal to lower the voting age to include voluntary voting for 16 & 17 year olds.

Capacity Building & Sector Development

The Youth Coalition provides a range of activities that aim to support workers, services, and the youth sector to build their capacity to work with young people in the ACT.

Examples of sector development undertaken by the Youth Coalition this year include:

- Youth Housing and Homelessness Forum: Held every two months, the YHHF brings together a network of staff from across the community and government sectors who support young people in the ACT who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Multicultural Youth Affairs Network (MYAN) ACT: A network that seeks to progress issues for multicultural young people, particularly those who are newly arrived or of refugee background.
- Youth Worker Practice Network: A Community of Practice for frontline youth workers. The Youth Worker Practice Network cultivates a 'high value for time' principle, ensuring that the time members allocate to being involved in the network will see a return on investment through:
 - Improved individual practice
 - A better informed and more cohesive youth sector
 - Opportunities for support and mentoring, leading to a reduction of 'burnout' and increased staff retention across the youth sector
 - Improved outcomes for the programs that members work in and the young people they support.
- Activities include regular 2 hour informal training sessions, formal full day / multi day training opportunities, and 'out of hours' social activities.
- Annual Youth Sector Awards: In December 2017 we held the 14th Annual Youth Sector Awards, the 'YOGIES'. These awards recognise, celebrate and promote outstanding practice of youth workers and community organisations in the ACT and surrounding area.
 - Congratulations to the winners of the 2016 Yogie Awards:
 - Outstanding Achievement in Youth Participation: LGBTQIA* & Allies Prom 2017, YWCA Canberra
 - Innovation in Service Delivery: Intensive Diversion Program, Canberra PCYC
 - Commendation: 360 Initiative - Non-Binary Clothing Line, YWCA Canberra
 - Excellence in Research and Evaluation: Research to Practice Series, Institute of Child Protection Studies
 - Outstanding Youth Worker: Richie Unga, St Johns YouthCare
 - Commendation: Jeremy Leala, Woden Community Service
 - Commendation: Rhonda Foley, Girl Guides Australia
 - Canberra Youth Work Champion: Daniel Gaffney, Belconnen Community Service
 - Outstanding New Talent: Olivia Hatfield, Anglicare
 - Lifetime Achievement: Fiona MacGregor
 - Outstanding Contribution to Young People: Umair Qureshi, Anglicare YEP
 - Commendation: Fox Fromholtz, headspace Canberra
 - Staff Acknowledgement: Families ACT

Information & Advice

A core function of the Youth Coalition is to communicate information and provide advice to members and stakeholders. Examples of the ways in which we do this include:

- Participating in one off meetings, or providing advice and information via phone or email
- Regular updates to the Youth Coalition of the ACT's website. This year the Youth Coalition launched a new website
- Active use of social media accounts, including Facebook and Twitter

Projects

At Odds: Young People & Gambling Project

Following the At Odds: Young People and Gambling in the ACT which ran from September 2015 - March 2017, a follow up phase of phase of the project is running throughout 2018. This phase has updated and improved the website and social media materials, allowing young people, family and friends and youth workers to access factual and engaging information regarding gambling and young people.

Reimagine

For Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2018, the Youth Coalition released a one-off publication titled Reimagine. Celebrating the strengths of young people who have experienced homelessness, and the youth workers who support them, Reimagine was published online and in print, and included personal stories, poetry, artwork, and information on youth homelessness & support services.

Youth Homelessness Research Project

The Youth Coalition conducted focus groups with youth workers to obtain their perspectives on homelessness for young people aged 12 - 15 in the ACT, and produced a written report. This work has helped inform the ongoing work of developing an Action Plan to address Youth Homelessness.

Youth Participation Projects

The Youth Coalition's Youth Participation Projects are sponsored through the funds raised by hiring out our facility to businesses and organisations, so thank you to all of our members and partners who have hired our space this year - your contribution continues to support young people, and is appreciated. As part of our commitment to supporting young people, we have also been able to donate our meeting space for various meetings and training run by youth-led organisations and young people throughout the year.

The Youth Coalition regularly engages with young people, through consultations, and providing opportunities for young people to advocate for themselves in a range of forums and events.

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