



About the Youth Coalition Policy Platform

This document provides information on the background and development of the Youth Coalition Policy Platform, the structure of the Policy Platform, and key policy principles.

Background and Development

The Youth Coalition of the ACT Policy Platform is a collection of living documents, which seek to:

- Clearly articulate the collective views of members of the Youth Coalition;
- Provide leadership in the youth sector;
- Inform and guide the Youth Coalition in its on-going work;
- Provide information on key issues affecting young people aged 12 – 25 years in the ACT, and those who work with them; and,
- Identify the Youth Coalition's commitments to progressing these key areas.

The Policy Platform strives to maintain currency in an ever changing and complex sector, by engaging in ongoing consultation with members, stakeholders and young people. The Youth Coalition also consults with leading experts and respected professional academics to seek critical feedback on current and future processes.

The process for developing the 2013 Policy Platform included:

- The development of a range of draft policy platforms; based upon new and recent research, and feedback received from members, stakeholders and young people through a range of consultations, surveys and submissions that have occurred in the last two years;
- Broad dissemination of the suite of draft Policy Platforms, inviting feedback from members, stakeholders and young people;
- Targeted consultations on draft Policy Platforms with key stakeholders in the youth and community sectors;
- Specific consultations with young people aged 12 – 25 years to discuss those policy areas identified by young people as being the most important; and,
- Consulting with respected academic peers to review selected policy platforms.

The Youth Coalition considers the Policy Platform to be a 'living' document. As such, we anticipate that the Policy Platform will be regularly reviewed and updated, and engagement processes evaluated. While a complete review and consultation currently occurs biennially, the Youth Coalition will endeavour to review and identify new Policy Platforms as needed.

Structure

Each Policy Platform provides an overview of contemporary concerns and matters of importance affecting young people in the ACT, and those who work with them; and outlines clear actions that the Youth Coalition is committed to undertaking to progress those issues. These commitments are based upon the views of the Youth Coalition membership, along with other stakeholders, and young people; along with the underlying principles of the Policy Platform.

Policy Principles

The Youth Coalition's Policy Principles underpin and drive the organisation's activities. They are developed and reviewed in conjunction with our biennial Policy Platform review, as well as being informed by ongoing consultations with the membership.

Access and Equity

All people, irrespective of their age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, or disability have an equal right to those experiences and resources that support a satisfying quality of life. The Youth Coalition is committed to promoting the principles that everyone has the right to equal, non-discriminatory access to services. However, we recognise that particular groups of young people, including those that experience barriers to accessing universal services, can require specific service provision that enable safe and supported environments and provide targeted support.

The Youth Coalition is committed to advocating for resources, programs and services to be equitably available to young people.

Social Justice

The Youth Coalition believes that the current social, economic and physical structures that exist in young people's lives can impose systemic disadvantage on certain individuals and groups. The Youth Coalition believes that economic and political processes must be developed to address the structural causes of this social injustice.

In order to address the needs of young people in the ACT, a whole of community and whole of government approach must be adopted to support social justice principles. To achieve social justice young people must be guaranteed equitable access to society's common resources. The Youth Coalition will promote social justice by treating its work for and with disadvantaged and vulnerable young people as its highest priority.

The Youth Coalition recognises the work of the World Health Organization on the Social Determinants of Health. The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy choices. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for wellbeing inequities -the unfair and avoidable differences in status seen within and between countries, cities and communities.

Diversity

The Youth Coalition believes that the diversity of young people in the ACT provides a rich and positive contribution to the community. Diversity is a strength that should be supported, nurtured and celebrated. The Youth Coalition respects the many views and backgrounds that young people in the ACT may have, and seeks to promote respect and tolerance for all.

Further to this, the Youth Coalition understands the tremendous value of specialised knowledge, skills and service provision and supports the development of such services. Service delivery should be premised on the understanding that young people are not a homogenous group and do not necessarily define themselves by their age.

Social inclusion

The Youth Coalition operates from the position that all young people should feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society.

Empowerment

The Youth Coalition is committed to empowering young people to participate within their community by supporting young people to value themselves and their contributions. The Youth Coalition will assist individuals and groups to represent themselves and will promote the exchange of skills and information for this purpose.

Youth Participation

All young people have the right to participate in the making of decisions that affect them. Consultative processes established for this purpose should be accessible and facilitate open discourse. Decision-makers who consult with young people have a responsibility to respect the advice provided and to incorporate this advice into their decisions. The Youth Coalition will continue to develop participatory processes that are useful, realistic, flexible and adaptable to a changing social environment. Young people also have a right to have a say in their participation as consumers of a service. The Youth Coalition supports young people to engage with service providers with the principles of openness and collaboration outlined above.

Advocacy

Believing that all people have a right of equal access to services and to an equitable share of resources, the Youth Coalition is committed to advocating on behalf of young people for the fulfilment of these rights, and to supporting advocacy by other organisations for the same purpose. The Youth Coalition supports and encourages young people to advocate on their own behalf and on behalf of their peers.

Accountability

Organisations that affect the lives of young people must be accountable to young people. This means that the use of resources, distribution of powers, development of policy and implementation of programs must be open to scrutiny. Mechanisms must be put in place to enable young people and their advocates to hold relevant authorities to account. In keeping with these principles, the Youth Coalition is fully accountable to its members and funding bodies.

Sector Development

The ability of the youth sector to support and empower young people is strengthened by the application of long-term, best practice, continuous improvement strategies. Innovative practices enable the sector to cater for emerging youth issues and target groups.

The Youth Coalition recognises that co-ordination between services and a greater emphasis on preventative strategies are priority areas for the youth sector. The Youth Coalition is committed to securing resources, professional and information that enable the sector to deliver relevant, flexible and effective services. The Youth Coalition strongly supports the funding and encouragement of community development approaches to service delivery in the ACT.

Collaboration

Cooperative endeavours involving the meaningful partnership of different sectors and groups represent the most appropriate strategy for policy development and the delivery of services. Strong relationships between sectors and within the youth sector are required to increase awareness of youth issues and to create more opportunities for young people's involvement.

It is important to develop collaborative relationships with organisations providing services and advocacy in all areas affecting young people, including housing, substitute care, drug and alcohol use, disability, justice, income support, education, training, employment and mental, sexual and general health.

The Youth Coalition will work closely with young people, service providers, government and the broader community to promote joint advocacy strategies regarding issues that affect young people.

Good Governance

The Youth Coalition believes the primary objectives of public and social policy should be the elimination of poverty, exploitation, alienation and all forms of discrimination. The opinions, needs and interests of young people must be reflected in all relevant government policy. Young people are a diverse population within the community who have a variety of changing needs.

In order for government policy to achieve desirable outcomes it is necessary to ensure effective coordination of national, state and local policy. For policy to be relevant and effective the systemic issues that affect young people must be addressed in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs. All government policy must, where appropriate, involve thorough, meaningful consultation, and be accountable to the community and open to review and criticism.