



Analysis of the 2017-18 ACT Budget

Overview, Priorities for Young People, and Media Release

June 2017

www.youthcoalition.net

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

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

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

The Youth Coalition of the ACT (Youth Coalition) is the peak youth affairs body in the Australian Capital Territory and is responsible for representing the interests of people aged between 12 and 25 years of age and those who work with them. The Youth Coalition works to actively promote the well being and aspirations of young people in the ACT with particular respect to their political, cultural, economic and social development. The Youth Coalition is represented on many ACT advisory structures and provides advice to the ACT Government on a range of issues related to young people and youth services.

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The Youth Coalition would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support and input of the ACT Peaks network, in particular our partnership work with Families ACT, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT, Mental Health Community Coalition ACT, ACT Shelter, Women's Centre for Health Matters, and the ACT Council of Social Services.

The Youth Coalition receives funding for peak activity (policy development, sector development, advocacy & representation) from the ACT Government Community Services Directorate.

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Contents

Introduction	3
Education Equity	5
Mental Health	10
Jobs Creation and Employment Pathways	14
Addressing Youth Housing / Homelessness	16
Services and Supports for Children, Young People and Families	19
Access to Transport	24
Youth Participation in the Canberra Community	26
Media Release	29

Introduction

The 2017-18 ACT Budget delivered a number of positive initiatives for young Canberrans that the Youth Coalition has been calling for over the last few years. In particular, we commend the ACT Government for investing in youth mental health services and increasing investment in child protection and out of home care services.

With 25% of young people experiencing a mental health issue in any given year,¹ long wait times have become the norm for many of our youth mental health services in the ACT. We believe some of the budget measures focused on youth mental health have the potential to alleviate some of the pressure on services and increase their capacity to support the mental health and wellbeing of young Canberrans.

However, outside of mental health and out of home care, there is little in the 2017-18 ACT Budget that will ensure younger members of our community can share in the opportunities of a strengthening local economy. We are particularly disappointed with the lack of investment in specific initiatives to address housing affordability and youth unemployment and underemployment.

We welcome the new focus on education equity through the Future of Education program, but do not believe the education initiatives in this Budget will deliver improved outcomes for students experiencing educational disadvantage. We look forward to working with the ACT Government to ensure the Future of Education program prioritises a student-centred approach that looks beyond the school gate and engages a broad range of stakeholders.

For many years, we have been calling on the ACT Government to move beyond funding in silos and approach the ACT Budget with a strategic perspective that addresses the social determinants of health, and invests in early intervention and prevention.

Last year we commended the Treasurer for taking a whole of government approach to addressing domestic and family violence through the Safer Families package and we are disappointed that this approach to funding is absent in the 2017-18 ACT Budget. The Youth Coalition will continue to call for a long term, big picture vision for the ACT that looks beyond the silos of government portfolios.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, *Australian Social Trends: Mental Health*.

Key Priorities for Young People & Youth Sector

Key priority areas that the Youth Coalition identified in our submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget were:

1. Education
2. Mental Health
3. Jobs Creation / Employment
4. Housing and Homelessness
5. Supports for Children, Young People, and Families
6. Access to Transport
7. Youth Participation in the Canberra Community

General Comments

The Youth Coalition made recommendations in our submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget urging the ACT Government to make a sustainable difference to long term Government expenditure by investing in early intervention and prevention services, and addressing the social determinants of health.

The Youth Coalition's full submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget is available online: <https://members.youthcoalition.net/sites/default/files/documents/ACT%20Budget%20Submission.pdf>

Our key recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.

Increase investment in coordinated strategies and services that address the social determinants of health.	Partially met
Increase investment in early intervention and prevention services.	Partially met
<p>The Youth Coalition welcomes investments that will help alleviate some of the pressure on our already overstretched specialised social service system, including investments in specialist housing and homelessness services, mental health services, justice programs, legal assistance, disability support and child protection.</p> <p>However, we are disappointed in the lack of investment in prevention and early intervention measures that will ultimately alleviate the pressures at the tertiary end of our service system. An understanding of early intervention and prevention and the social determinants of health invites us to consider who is responsible for responses to significant social issues that affect our community across a range of spheres. We will continue to call on the ACT Government to prioritise early intervention and prevention as a guiding principle when making budgetary decisions.</p>	

Education Equity

Improving education attainment outcomes and addressing educational inequity in the ACT has been a key focus area for the Youth Coalition in recent years. While the ACT has a relatively high standard of education and good outcomes for most young people, inequities still exist in the educational achievement of disadvantaged cohorts of young Canberrans.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to improve educational attainment and inequity for vulnerable students in the ACT by responding to a number of recommendations. Our recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.

Provide social and emotional support and interventions in the early childhood and education settings that strengthen peer relationships.	Partially met
Continue to focus investment in supporting students from key equity groups, including students from low socio-economic backgrounds; students with English as an additional language or dialect; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and, students with disability.	Partially met
Invest in early identification of disadvantage, and support throughout childhood and teenage years using long term programs.	Not met
<p>The 2017-18 ACT Budget includes the allocation of \$2.36 million for five new school psychologists. This investment represents the first step of the ACT Government’s commitment to funding 20 additional school psychologists in ACT public schools. The Youth Coalition is disappointed that the five new school psychologists will be employed by the Education Directorate, and will therefore not be available to provide support to children and young people outside of school hours and during school holidays.</p> <p>While we welcome this investment in clinical support for students, we are disappointed that this has not been matched with investment in community-based services. We will continue to advocate for a cross-sector, co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to ensure support is available for students and families both inside and outside school hours and school terms.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition welcomes the \$3 million in additional funding to support students with disability in ACT public schools, but we note that this is only for one year. Targeted support for key equity groups, including students with disability, has been a central part of the Youth Coalition’s advocacy on education equity for a number of years.</p>	

We highlight the challenges faced by students from other key equity groups, including students from low socio-economic backgrounds; students with English as an additional language or dialect; and, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. We acknowledge that these groups have been recognised through the *Student Resource Allocation* initiative that is currently being rolled out in ACT public schools. We will continue to work with the Education Directorate and look forward to an evaluation of the program to ensure that it is effectively meeting the needs of these students.

We are also pleased to see the \$400,000 investment over four years in the Safe Schools program. This investment fulfills the ACT Government’s commitment to address the gap left by the Commonwealth Government and will allow for the continuation of this important program in the ACT.

The Youth Coalition also welcomes the \$16.1 million funding for 66 school assistants to provide increased support to teachers in public schools to reduce administrative workload and enable a stronger focus on students and teaching. We note the important role that school assistants can play in supporting a productive classroom environment, particularly in providing one-on-one support to students with complex needs. However, we highlight that a number of issues were raised in the *Schools for All* report, including concerns about the adequacy of support, training and respite for school assistants. As such, we expect that all school assistants have opportunities for ongoing professional learning and support that is relevant to their role.

Invest in community services to increase their capacity to respond to and partner with schools and provide targeted intensive supports to young people and their families.	Not met
Provide case management and group work in schools, and expand resources to expand capacity and reach of services who work collaboratively with schools.	Not met
<p>While the Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government for its commitment to education equity through the Future of Education program, we are disappointed at the lack of additional funding to increase the capacity of community services to respond to and partner with schools to support the educational outcomes of students experiencing disadvantage.</p> <p>We believe community services have the skills, expertise and already established relationships to provide support to schools and work with these students to support their educational outcomes. We note that initiatives aimed at improving education engagement and attainment are often based on the premise that community services will partner with schools and teachers to provide additional support and programs where needed. However, we</p>	

continue to highlight the already stretched capacity of services to meet demand. The Youth Coalition will continue to advocate for a coordinated funding approach to increase the capacity of community services to respond to and work in partnership with schools to support vulnerable students.

Provide targeted support to children and young people, particularly those aged 8-12, to successfully transition from primary to high school.	Not met
<p>The Youth Coalition is disappointed that there is no targeted investment within the Education Directorate to support children and young people in the “Middle Years”, those aged 8-12, in their transition from primary to high school. It is well established that this transition is a crucial time for young people and their continued engagement with education. We will continue to call for early intervention investment in this area.</p> <p>We highlight that the Health Directorate has acknowledged the importance of the Middle Years and welcome the expansion of the CAMHS Primary School Intervention Program to children and young people aged 5-12 years. We are disappointed that the Middle Years have not been similarly reflected in the Education Directorate’s measures.</p>	

2017-18 ACT Budget Initiatives

Key initiatives in the 2017-18 ACT Budget relating to education include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- Better schools for our kids – Future of education community conversation (\$546,000 over 2 years)

The Government will facilitate a community conversation to explore how education can be best delivered to meet the needs of the next generation of students and better prepare them for the workforce. This initiative will also consider how we can best prepare children to learn through their early years.

- Better schools for our kids – Investing in our teachers – STEM and language scholarships (\$875,000 over 4 years)

The Government will provide scholarships for teachers to support a high quality Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and languages teaching workforce.

- Better schools for our kids – More support for teachers (\$16.1m over 4 years)

The Government will provide increased support to teachers in public schools to reduce administrative workload and enable a stronger focus on students and teaching. This initiative provides for increased school assistants in public schools and is partially funded from within existing resources.

- Better schools for our kids – New school facilities in East Gungahlin – Early planning (\$250,000 over 1 year)

The Government will explore options for a new school in East Gungahlin to continue to deliver social public benefits to the growing population in the area.

- Better schools for our kids – Safe Schools program (\$400,000 over 4 years)

The Government will support all ACT schools to actively include same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and families. The program will improve the capacity of schools to provide advice and support to students and their families and will be partially funded from within existing resources.

- Better schools for our kids – Safe workplaces for teachers, educators and support staff (\$951,000 over 3 years)

The Government will continue to support inclusive and safe educational environments by employing three additional staff to develop policy and provide consultation and support in relation to occupational violence. This initiative offers a risk assessment, problem-solving and preventative approach to ensuring safe environments within the educational setting.

- Better schools for our kids – School psychologists (\$2.3m over 4 years)

The Government will employ five full-time school psychologists in 2018 as the first step in delivering its commitment of 20 additional school psychologists. These staff will support student wellbeing and mental health outcomes for students, parents and carers, within schools and the community.

- Better schools for our kids – Supporting students with disability (\$3m over 1 year)

The Government will continue to support students with disability in ACT public schools by ensuring equitable access to education for these students both now and in the future. This initiative will address new growth in enrolments and complexity to ensure the needs of students with disability are met. Future funding decisions will be considered in the context of the 2018-19 Budget.

- More and better jobs – Making Canberra an even better place to study (\$3m over 4 years)

The Government, in partnership with Canberra's education sector, will continue to promote Canberra as Australia's study destination of choice for local, interstate and international students, and help drive continuous improvement in Canberra's student experience.

Select Capital Works Initiatives

- Better schools for our kids – Technology-enabled learning (\$17.1m over 4 years)

The Government is supporting technology-enabled learning by seeking best practice advice on the most effective way to ensure that all public school students in Years 7 and 10 have access to a device to enhance and further their learning. These amounts will be reviewed in the 2017-18 Budget Review, and have therefore been provisioned.

- Better schools for our kids – Public school infrastructure upgrades (\$85m over 4 years)

The Government will invest in the renewal of our public school facilities, including upgrades and extensions to existing classrooms, new classrooms, refurbished toilets and change rooms, garden and horticultural facilities, heating and cooling upgrades, and energy efficiency improvements.

- Better schools for our kids - Belconnen High School (\$5.9m over 2 years)

The Government is continuing to work to create a contemporary learning and teaching environment at Belconnen High School.

- Better schools for our kids – Expanding schools in Gungahlin (\$24m over 4 years)

The Government will increase student capacity at Harrison, Gold Creek, Neville Bonner and Palmerston Schools.

- Better schools for our kids – Narrabundah College and Campbell Primary School (\$1.2m over 1 year)

The Government will upgrade facilities and remove hazardous materials to ensure these two local schools continue to meet the current and future needs of students, teachers and the community.

- Better schools for our kids – New school facilities in Molonglo – Early planning (\$500,000 over 1 year)

The Government is undertaking planning activities for a new school in the Molonglo Valley to continue to deliver good and local schooling to the growing population in the area.

- Better schools for our kids – Non-government school infrastructure upgrades (\$15m over 4 years)

The Government is making provisions for capital grant funding for infrastructure upgrades in non-government schools.

- Better facilities for our students – Improving vocational training facilities (2.6m over 1 year)

The Government is upgrading classroom, library and workshop facilities to ensure vocational students have access to high quality facilities.

Mental Health

Mental health issues are likely to be significant in many young people's lives with 25% experiencing a mental health issue in any given year.² There are approximately 78,000³ young people in the ACT meaning almost 20,000 young Canberrans are likely to experience mental ill health at some point in any given year.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to support the mental health and wellbeing of young Canberrans by responding to a number of recommendations. Our recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.

<p>Prioritise the provision of \$1.6 million to headspace Canberra to employ five more staff and increase their capacity to meet demand for youth mental health support.</p>	<p>Partially met</p>
<p>The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government for delivering a number of budget initiatives focused on supporting the mental health and wellbeing young people. In particular, we welcome the \$400,000 investment in headspace Canberra. We believe this investment will begin to alleviate some of the pressures on the service, including long wait times.</p> <p>While we are disappointed that this funding is for one year only, we understand that this announcement comes at a time with considerable uncertainty about the future of Commonwealth funding for headspace across the country. The Youth Coalition, however, will continue to call on the ACT Government to prioritise investment in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young Canberrans.</p>	
<p>Invest in community development projects and programs that increase family and community capacity to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people.</p>	<p>Not met</p>
<p>The Youth Coalition is disappointed in the lack of investment in initiatives that increase the community's knowledge and confidence in supporting mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>We believe that investment in early intervention and prevention must acknowledge and engage family and friends in supporting young people's mental health. It is frequently through</p>	

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, Australian Social Trends: Mental Health.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013, Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia.

the intervention of these people that professional mental health care is sought, and the information, beliefs and barriers experienced by family and friends must also be addressed.

The Youth Coalition will continue to encourage the ACT Government to redeploy funding to grow investment in projects and programs that seek to increase the community’s knowledge about mental health, and support the capacity of young people and their families to seek help.

Invest in multidisciplinary teams within schools and community-based youth services to increase their capacity to deliver more integrated, efficient and effective mental health support to students. This support must be available inside and outside of school hours and school terms.

Partially met

The 2017-18 ACT Budget includes the allocation of \$2.36 million for five new school psychologists. This investment represents the first step of the ACT Government’s commitment to funding 20 additional school psychologists in ACT public schools.

In our submission to this budget, we welcomed this commitment, but also called for investment in strengthening the capacity of multidisciplinary teams within schools, as well as community-based youth services, to support the wellbeing of students. In particular, we stressed the need for this support to be available not only during school hours, but after school and over the holiday periods as well.

We are disappointed that the five new school psychologists will be employed by the Education Directorate, and will therefore not be available to provide support to children and young people outside of school hours and during school holidays.

While we welcome this investment in clinical support for students, we are disappointed that this has not been matched with investment in community-based services. We will continue to advocate for a cross-sector, co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to ensure support is available for students and families both inside and outside school hours and school terms.

Address the gap between early intervention and crisis services to ensure there is a continuum of care to address the mental health needs of young people.

Partially met

The Youth Coalition welcomes the \$2.9 million investment to establish an Office for Mental Health. We understand further details regarding the Office are forthcoming and look forward to working with the ACT Government and our community partners to shape and support the Office in its new role. We also welcome the investment in clinical supports for young people, but are concerned about the overall lack of investment in early intervention and prevention.

The introduction of health checks for all Year 7 students, with a focus on identifying those at risk of developing mental health issues, is welcome in principle, but we would like to see more detail. In particular, we have questions about what happens next for a young person identified as 'at risk'? We have already raised concerns about the already overstretched capacity of multidisciplinary teams within schools, as well as community-based services outside of schools. The Youth Coalition will continue to call for investment that addresses the gap between early intervention and crisis services in the ACT mental health system.

Act on the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Service's report on the <i>Inquiry into Youth Suicide and Self Harm in the ACT</i> .	Not met
Respond to youth suicide and self-harm, by seeking to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address social determinants of health; • Invest in early intervention and prevention; • Address young people's mental health and wellbeing holistically; and, • Invest in strengths based community development. 	Partially met
Ensure the active involvement of young people in the planning and development of suicide prevention activities.	Not met

The Youth Coalition welcomes the \$1.7 million investment over four years into suicide prevention support services, including the Way Back support program and the Black Dog Institute's Lifespan Suicide Prevention Program.

Last year, the Youth Coalition welcomed the opportunity to provide a written submission and appear at a public hearing for the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Service (the Standing Committee) *Inquiry into Youth Suicide and Self-Harm* (the Inquiry).

Despite the positive move in funding from the government in mental health reform in the Canberra community, we are concerned that the Legislative Assembly are yet to address the Inquiry. It is imperative that, as a community, we act quickly on an issue as pressing as youth suicide and self harm.

We urge the ACT Government to ensure that young people are involved in the planning and development of suicide prevention activities in the ACT. Over the last 3 years, the Youth Coalition has built a network of young people who are passionate about improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people in our community. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the ACT Government and support young advocates to be involved in the planning and development of suicide prevention activities in the ACT.

2017-18 ACT Budget Initiatives

Key initiatives in 2017-18 ACT Budget relating to mental health include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- Better care when you need it – Office for Mental Health (\$2.9m over 4 years)

The Government will enhance the coordination of mental health services in the ACT by establishing an Office for Mental Health. The Office will support the coordination of services and work towards closing gaps in the ACT mental health system.

- Better care when you need it – Rehabilitation beds for Dhulwa Mental Health Unit over (\$13.8m over 4 years)

The Government will enhance support for people with complex mental health needs by expanding services at the Dhulwa Mental Health Unit. This investment reflects the Government's commitment to commission seven rehabilitation beds in the secure mental health unit.

- Better care when you need it – Suicide prevention (\$1.7m over 4 years)

The Government will invest in suicide prevention support services, including through the Way Back support program and the Black Dog Institute's Lifespan Suicide Prevention Program.

- Better care when you need it – Supporting mental health for vulnerable Canberrans (\$5.3m over 4 years)

The Government will support activities that improve the mental health of Canberrans with a particular focus on perinatal mental health services as well as those for children and young people. The Government will support the important mental health services provided by headspace and the Detention Exit Outreach program as well as undertake minor upgrades at the Brian Hennessey Rehabilitation Centre.

- Better care when you need it – Year 7 health checks (\$2.6m over 4 years)

The Government will implement health checks for Year 7 school students from 2018-19. The new health checks will help identify students at risk of developing mental health issues or chronic diseases.

Jobs Creation and Employment Pathways

Youth unemployment and underemployment continues to be a concern both locally and nationally. The Youth Coalition believes that ACT Government agencies, youth and community support services, and the wider community have a shared responsibility to ensure that young people are supported to maximise their engagement in education, training and employment.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to respond to a number of recommendations related job creation and employment pathways for young people in the ACT. The recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.

Develop and promote local responses to youth unemployment, that involve collaboration between ACT Government, business, schools, services and young people to design targeted local responses, and act on them.	Not met
Increase the availability of flexible programs that provide meaningful work experience, and prepare young people for work in today's world.	Not met
Implement and report on targets and strategies in all ACT Government-funded projects that anticipate creating jobs (such as the infrastructure program) to ensure that these projects employ people from specific demographics who are vulnerable to unemployment, such as young people.	Not met
Invest in a pilot program offering a period of guaranteed employment in ACT Government to young people who are transitioning from Care.	Not met
<p>While jobs growth is picking up for the rest of the population, youth unemployment and underemployment remain a concern for the Territory. In the current context of a strengthening economy, the Youth Coalition is disappointed in the lack of investment in specific initiatives to address youth unemployment and underemployment in the 2016-17 ACT Budget.</p> <p>We welcome the investment of \$1.3 million over four years to support new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers into the workforce. In partnership with Multicultural Youth Services ACT (MYS), the Youth Coalition coordinates the Multicultural Youth Affairs Network ACT (MYAN ACT). In recent years, employment has emerged as a key issue facing young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. We understand that the Multicultural Employment Service</p>	

was initiated in 2013 as part of MYS. The Youth Coalition encourages the ACT Government to ensure that the new job brokering service for refugees and asylum seekers engages with, complements and builds on already established programs in the ACT, such as the Multicultural Employment Service.

It is our understanding that the ACT Government's business development strategy and increased infrastructure spending are key ways that the Government supports employment growth. We will continue to encourage the ACT Government to implement and report on targets and strategies to ensure that these projects employ people in the community most vulnerable to unemployment, particularly young people.

In his Budget speech, the Treasurer pointed to the success of our education sector, which represents 30 per cent of our total service exports. We urge the ACT Government to invest in measures that support our students with viable and meaningful post-study job options that will facilitate their continued contribution to our growing economy. We believe it is not only important to attract young people to the Territory to study, but to also stimulate an employment market that allows them to remain here once they have graduated.

2017-18 ACT Budget Initiatives

Key initiatives in 2017-18 ACT Budget relating to jobs creation and employment pathways for young people include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- *Better support when it matters – More support for refugees and new migrants (\$1.3m over 4 years)*

The Government will help new migrants looking to enter the workforce by expanding english language programs and providing a job brokering service for refugees and asylum seekers.

Addressing Youth Housing / Homelessness

Addressing youth homelessness and improving the supply of affordable housing has been a key policy focus area for the Youth Coalition for a number of years. Housing is a fundamental determinant of health, well-being, social connection, and workforce participation.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to respond to a number of recommendations related to housing and homelessness that were jointly developed by the community sector under the leadership of ACTCOSS. The recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.

Sustain funding to Commonwealth/ACT jointly funded programs under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, even if the Commonwealth withdraws funding, and improve access to emergency housing.	Met
In May 2017, the Youth Coalition welcomed the Commonwealth Government announcement of a new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, that will replace the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and the National Affordable Housing Agreement from 2018-19 to the end of forward estimates and indexing the NPAH component for the first time. We are pleased that the ACT Government has matched this investment in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.	
All directorates to report on how their roles and responsibilities impact on homelessness and the supply of accessible, affordable housing as part of their annual reporting requirements.	Not met
Any directorate not already contributing at least one percent of their operating budget to housing and/or reducing homelessness to allocate one percent of their operating budget to fund additional measures that increase provision of services to reduce homelessness and increase supply of accessible, affordable housing.	Not met
Fund knowledge and skills development so that people working with men and women exiting out-of-home care, mental health, drug and alcohol, acute health care, criminal justice, and homelessness services are able to provide tenancy advice/advocacy/support.	Not met

<p>The ACT Government divert \$100 million from its investment portfolio in bonds to create an investment fund for community housing providers for the purpose of building new accessible, affordable rental housing. The fund would be held in perpetuity and repaid at government bond rates.</p>	<p>Not met</p>
<p>Fund the Housing Policy Consortium peak bodies: ACT Shelter, the ACT Council of Social Service, the Youth Coalition of the ACT, and the Women’s Centre for Health Matters (WCHM) to continue undertake local original research into housing and homelessness in the ACT.</p>	<p>Not met</p>
<p>The Youth Coalition welcomes the modest investment in specialist homelessness and housing support services. In particular, we are pleased to see the commitment to developing a system-wide, trauma informed approach to homelessness support services. Research by the housing and homelessness policy consortia identified this as a critical need for the ACT.</p> <p>However, we join ACTCOSS and other community agencies in expressing our disappointment in the lack of investment in measures that will effectively address housing affordability in the ACT. As an issue that gained considerable community support in the lead up the ACT Election, we are disappointed that the 2017-18 ACT Budget does not include significant investments toward developing an affordable housing strategy for the Territory.</p>	

2017-18 ACT Budget Initiatives

Key initiatives in 2017-18 ACT Budget relating to youth housing and homelessness include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- Better support when it matters – Planning for social housing (\$350,000 over 1 year)

The Government will undertake planning to inform the future design of accommodation and support requirements for clients with high and complex needs. This will focus on social inclusion, life outcomes and wellbeing for vulnerable individuals who are at significant risk of homelessness.

- Better support when it matters – Strengthening homelessness services (\$6.3m over 4 years)

The Government is continuing to support homelessness services under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement to enhance social inclusion and improve the life outcomes and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of doing so.

- Better support when it matters – Strengthening specialist homelessness and housing support services (\$1m over 4 years)

The Government will strengthen specialist homelessness and housing support services to improve the support provided to vulnerable groups in the community. This will be achieved through a homelessness summit, investing in professional development and training for the specialist homelessness sector, providing further support to the UnitingCare Early Morning Centre, and developing a system-wide, trauma informed approach to homelessness support services.

Select Capital Works Initiatives

- *Better support when it matters – Public Housing Renewal – New and better properties (\$47.4m over 2 years)*

The Government will continue to renew public housing and construct modern public housing to enhance community and planning outcomes.

Services and Supports for Children, Young People and Families

As the peak body for youth affairs, the Youth Coalition is committed to promoting the human rights, wellbeing and aspirations of young Canberrans. Addressing the root causes of social disadvantage and vulnerability is a clear policy goal locally and nationally, and a common desire in the community sector.

We strongly believe that by addressing the social determinants of health, vulnerable young people can be supported to interrupt and/or move out of cycles of poverty and disadvantage, and live healthy, prosperous lives.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to respond to a number of recommendations related to children, young people and families. The recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.

Invest in community development projects and programs that increase community capacity to support people with trauma histories.	Partially met
<p>The Youth Coalition welcomes the Housing ACT budget initiative that includes developing a system-wide, trauma informed approach to homelessness support services. We also acknowledge the previous investment of some ACT schools in providing trauma training to staff.</p> <p>Over the last 3 years, the youth sector has had an increasing focus on improving practice in relation to working with young people who have trauma histories. We believe that community youth services are best placed to provide support to young people with a history of trauma. At the same time, however, we also recognise the stretched capacity of community services in the current funding environment and the need for people across many professions (e.g. teachers, health professionals, emergency service professionals) to be trained in trauma-informed practice.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition will continue to call for a coordinated funding approach to increasing the community's capacity to support people who have experienced complex trauma.</p>	

Expand funding for access to the Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) so that all not-for-profit services working with people experiencing disadvantage that require TIS can access the service.	Not met
<p>The Youth Coalition is disappointed that increased investment for the Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) has not been included in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.</p> <p>It is best practice to engage an interpreter when a young person speaks limited or no English; speaks basic English but is under stress; when discussing important or sensitive information; or when a young person requests an interpreter.⁴ Evidence shows, however, that services are not engaging interpreters when required.⁵ One of the common barriers cited by workers and services is the cost of TIS.⁶</p> <p>Accessing TIS is a key challenge for workers and one of the most significant barriers for young people accessing services. We will continue to advocate for the use of interpreters as essential when providing support to young people with low English language proficiency. Increased investment is needed within the service system to ensure services have the budget to use interpreters and that workers are trained to use them.</p>	

Increase investment in the Children, Youth and Family Services Program.	Not met
<p>In our submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget, the Youth Coalition raised concerns about the stretched capacity of services funded under the Children, Youth and Family Services Program (CYFSP). We stressed that increased demand for services has not been met with increased funding in this program.</p> <p>We remain concerned that, at current capacity, CYFSP-funded services cannot meet community expectation or effectively address service needs and gaps that have been raised by referring agencies, such as ACT Policing, intake services and youth engagement workers, in recent months.</p> <p>We are concerned that investment in community services is not keeping pace with growth in new suburbs. For example, as new suburbs are developed, young people in those areas will seek out their nearest youth service. For young people in the new suburbs of Molonglo, their nearest youth engagement service is the Youth Engagement Team in Woden. For young people in the new suburbs of Gungahlin, it is the Y.Engage team in the City.</p>	

⁴ The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 2013, Promoting the Engagement of Interpreters in Victorian Health Services, Victoria.

⁵ The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 2013, Promoting the Engagement of Interpreters in Victorian Health Services, Victoria.

⁶ MYAN ACT, 2015, CYFSP Sector Survey 2015, Youth Coalition of the ACT, Canberra.

The Youth Coalition will continue to call on the ACT Government to increase investment in community services, including those funded under the CYFSP, to ensure that they can respond to the increasing service needs of a growing city.

Develop a fit for purpose service procurement framework that includes processes that engage directly with the community to ensure services meet expectations, improve quality, continuity, diversity and sustainability of both the service offer and the workforce. The procurement framework should ensure funder accountability to the community entitled to and/or accessing the service and drive ongoing improvement of procurement processes and outcomes from the perspective of service users.

Partially met

In our submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget, we supported ACTCOSS' call for a specific government commitment to improving community services procurement policy and practice through the implementation of the Industry Strategy.

We understand that the ACT Government are extending the Smart Modern Strategic Procurement reform program into other areas of government expenditure, including property maintenance, medical goods and services, and ICT systems. We echo ACTCOSS' call for a specific government commitment to improving community services procurement policy and practice through the implementation of the Industry Strategy.

2017-18 ACT Budget Initiatives

Key initiatives in 2017-18 ACT Budget relating to services and supports for children, young people and families include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- *Better support when it matters - Caring for our children and young people (\$43.7m over 4 years)*

The Government will strengthen support for vulnerable children and young people by providing increases to funding for child protection and out of home care services. The Government will also support a taskforce for one year to monitor the impact of reforms and will review interstate arrangements and policy settings to optimise outcomes for children, young people and their families.

- *Better support when it matters – Strengthening the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre (\$2.1 m over 4 years)*

The Government will support the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre to meet capacity requirements and ensure the continued safety and wellbeing of children and young people who are on remand or have been sentenced to detention.

- Better support when it matters – A Gender Agenda (\$500,000 over 3 years)

The Government will provide additional service funding to 'A Gender Agenda' to improve the intersex, transgender and gender diverse community's access to services and address barriers to participation in the broader community.

- Better support when it matters – Office for LGBTIQ Affairs (\$1.3m over 4 years)

The Government will provide additional funding for the Office for LGBTIQ Affairs to ensure that Canberra is the most LGBTIQ-friendly city in Australia. The Office will promote inclusive events and work across government to ensure that services meet the needs of LGBTIQ people in the community, as well as providing secretariat support for the LGBTIQ Ministerial Advisory Council.

- Better support when it matters – Family Safety Hub (\$540,000 over 4 years)

The Government will develop, pilot, refine, implement and evaluate a Family Safety Hub within the Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety. The Family Safety Hub will link existing support and services in the ACT for matters around family violence to ensure that clients receive seamless, integrated and holistic support from the Government and community services. This initiative is partially offset by Safer Families initiatives that did not fully utilise the available budget in 2016-17 and re-prioritising available funds following the completion of initiatives in future years.

- Better support when it matters – Public Advocate – Children and Young People's Advocacy and Oversight (\$631,000 over 4 years)

The Government will provide funding to increase the capacity of the Public Advocate's Office to better protect children and young people, and deliver enhanced monitoring of the provision of statutory services.

- Better support when it matters – Growing healthy families (\$502,000 over 1 year)

The Government will continue to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities with a range of culturally specific, safe and informed services in the areas of health, early childhood development and parenting.

- Better support when it matters – Children and Young People Death Review Committee (\$883,000 over 4 years)

The Government will continue to support the Children and Young People Death Review Committee. The Committee reviews all child deaths in the ACT, identifies emerging patterns and trends, and undertakes research and makes recommendations aimed at preventing child deaths.

- Better support when it matters – Protecting vulnerable Canberrans (\$1.6m over 1 year)

The Government will provide additional support for the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme to ensure that background checks continue to be undertaken in a timely manner.

Select Capital Works Initiatives

- Better support when it matters – Bimberi Youth Justice Centre communications (\$326,000 over 1 year)

The Government will replace the existing Bimberi Youth Justice Centre analogue radio system with a digital radio network.

- Better support when it matters – Child Youth Protection System Critical Information Migration (\$700,000 over 1 year)

The Government will transfer critical child protection information to a new Client Management System to improve integration and coordination of client data to support decision making.

- Better support when it matters – Improving community facilities (\$1.6m over 4 years)

The Government will undertake external area upgrades and facilities improvement works at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, the Child Development service in Holder, and Child and Family Centres in Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and West Belconnen. This initiative will be funded through the Better Infrastructure Fund.

- Better care when you need it – New health centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans (\$12m over 4 years)

The Government will invest in a new health facility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the ACT in partnership with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health which provides culturally appropriate primary health services.

Access to Transport

Public transport is often a young person's primary means of transportation. More than a third of respondents to the 2016 Rate Canberra Survey reported using public transport almost every day, with an additional 23% using it at least once a week.⁷ Public transport services, therefore, need to be affordable, safe and timely in order to facilitate young people's participation in employment, education, recreation and social activities.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to respond to a number of recommendations related to public transport. The recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.

Invest in increasing the frequency and hours of availability of public transport in the ACT, with a particular focus on additional evening, late night and weekend services.	Partially met
Investigate and address affordability as a barrier to young people accessing of public transport.	Not met
<p>The Youth Coalition welcomes budget measures that increase the range, frequency and accessibility of public transport. We applaud the ACT Government for continuing the trial of free off peak travel for seniors and concession card holders on all routes, but are disappointed that students have once again been excluded.</p> <p>In responding to the 2016 Rate Canberra Survey, young Canberrans identified limited transport accessibility as a barrier to their participation in employment, education, recreational and social activities.⁸ Young people also tell us that there is a need for more buses, in particular additional evening, late night and weekend services.⁹ This is particularly important for young people who are more likely than the general population to be engaged in part-time employment or recreational activities during the evenings and weekends, or those who live in Canberra's outer suburbs.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition welcomes the review of Transport for Canberra to guide future transport planning, infrastructure and services. As primary users of public transport, we urge the ACT Government to implement strategies that support and facilitate the participation of young people in this process.</p>	

⁷ Youth Coalition of the ACT, 2016, *Rate Canberra: Findings from the Survey of Young People Aged 12-25 in the ACT*.

⁸ Youth Coalition of the ACT, 2016, *Rate Canberra: Findings from the Survey of Young People Aged 12-25 in the ACT*.

⁹ Youth Coalition of the ACT, 2016, *Canberra, Let's Talk: ACT Election Workshop for Young People*.

2017-18 ACT Budget Initiatives

Key initiatives in 2017-18 ACT Budget relating to transport include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- *Better services in your community – Planning for Canberra’s future transport needs (\$750,000 over 1 year)*

The Government will undertake a comprehensive review of Transport for Canberra to guide future transport planning, infrastructure and services. This work will support the development of new policy to keep Canberra moving as the city grows.

- *Better schools for our kids – Safer walking and cycling around schools (\$2.2m over 4 years)*

The Government will provide a range of safety measures at 20 schools across the Territory to improve road safety and encourage walking and cycling to school. The program will include school crossing supervisors and physical improvements to school crossings, including line marking and additional signage. The capital component will be funded from the Better Infrastructure Fund.

- *Better services in your community – Investing in community transport (\$1.074m over 1 year)*

The Government will begin a six month trial of a flexible bus service to residents of the Inner North, and continue the work of the Community Transport Coordination Centre for a further year. The Government will progress work to fully realise the potential of the service.

- *Better services in your community – School transport for children with a disability (\$4.5m over 4 years)*

The Government will continue to provide transport to and from ACT public schools for students with a disability, through the Special Needs Transport fleet. The Government has fully funded this service in anticipation of the handover of this program to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

- *Building a better city – Bus service improvements (\$6.952m over 4 years)*

The Government will continue a range of public transport initiatives including the Free City Loop service and the airport bus service. The Government will also deliver additional routes, including continuing the Weston City Bus service; and relaunching the Xpresso Routes. The offset will be funded from within existing resources.

- *Building a better city – Light Rail Stage 2 – City to Woden – Design and procurement (\$53.5m over 3 years)*

The Government will further advance the second stage of light rail between the City and Woden by developing a business case that would be prepared following investigations into route selection, design and procurement methodology, along with an urban renewal strategy. Construction costs of the project will be formally considered by the Government following completion of the business case.

Select Capital Works Initiatives

- *Better services in your community – Faster bus travel (\$1.75m over 3 years)*

The Government will provide new bus stops in Griffith and along Gundaroo Drive, as well as constructing terminal and driver facilities in Dickson and better facilities in the City, Tuggeranong Valley and Watson.

- *Better services in your community – Integrated bus and light rail ticketing (\$2.1m over 1 year)*

The Government will replace the existing MyWay ticket system with a new integrated system that will operate on both buses and light rail. Funding in the outyears for this initiative has been placed in a central provision.

Youth Participation in the Canberra Community

The Youth Coalition is strongly committed to the concept of meaningful youth participation in service delivery and policy development, in recognition that young people have the right to have a say in decisions affecting their own lives. Young people's participation in decisions that affect them and the life of their community is valuable and has a range of positive outcomes for young people and those who engage with them.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to respond to a number of recommendations related to youth participation in the Canberra community. The recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.

Invest in strategies to engage meaningfully with young Canberrans regarding the Inquiry into the 2016 ACT Election and Electoral Act.	Not met
<p>The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government for its commitment to strengthen community consultation processes as outlined in the <i>Parliamentary Agreement for the 9th Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory</i>. We welcome investment in measures aimed at improving the community's involvement in decision-making across government through reforms to consultation and communication channels.</p> <p>We are also pleased that the due date for submissions to the Inquiry into the 2016 ACT Election and Electoral Act has been extended until 30 June 2017. In our submission to the 2017-18 ACT Budget, we raised concerns about the timeframe for the Inquiry, originally scheduled from 15 December 2016 to mid March 2017, due to the school holiday period.</p> <p>Despite this welcome extension, we are not aware of any specific measures that have been taken to ensure that young people can meaningfully engage in this Inquiry. This is particularly disappointing considering the Inquiry is looking specifically at lowering the voting age, an issue that affects young people directly.</p> <p>We believe that participating in a Select Committee Inquiry may be a daunting process for young people and will continue to encourage the ACT Government to invest in strategies that facilitate meaningful engagement of young people in government consultations.</p>	

Invest in supports to assist young people to access community facilities, grants, and other resources to lead their own activities and projects.	Not met
<p>Young people often experience a range of systemic barriers to their engagement and participation in community. Common barriers include: age discrimination (at an individual, community and societal level); limited access to opportunities; and inadequate resourcing to support meaningful youth participation.</p> <p>In addition, young people also consistently tell us that they experience further barriers, particularly where activities are youth-led, organised, or facilitated by young people themselves. Issues such as navigating the processes around gaining permission to access public space (which changes frequently), insurances and developing risk management plans, learning how to write grant applications or proposals for in kind support, and finding the right people in the community to seek support from, and being taken seriously have all been highlighted.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition will continue to call for investment in strategies that support young people to access community facilities, grants and other resources to lead their own activities and projects.</p>	

Invest in a week long program that celebrates young people's contribution to the Canberra community, to meet the gap that will be left by withdrawal of Australian Government funding to National Youth Week activities.	Not met
<p>The partnership between ACT Government and the community sector has been a key contributor to the success of National Youth Week in the ACT, as has the small seeding grants program, which has encouraged variety in events, and provided opportunities to ensure that groups of vulnerable young people are actively included in the celebrations.</p> <p>The withdrawal of Commonwealth funding to National Youth Week effectively means that these activities have ceased until further funding can be sourced. States and territories are looking to opportunities locally to find resources to continue to actively celebrate and recognise young people's contribution to and participation in community.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition is disappointed that there is no investment included in the 2017-18 ACT Budget to meet the gap left by the withdrawal of Commonwealth funding for National Youth Week activities. We understand, however, that government is aware of this gap and consideration is ongoing within the Community Services Directorate.</p>	

2017-18 ACT Budget Initiatives

Key initiatives in 2017-18 ACT Budget relating to youth participation include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- *More and better jobs – Ensuring your views are heard – Deliberative democracy (2.7m over 2 years)*

The Government will improve the community's involvement in decision-making across government through reforms to consultation and communication channels. This will include a pilot deliberative democracy project which will pursue policy reform opportunities through a citizens' jury.



MEDIA RELEASE: ACT Budget 2017-18

6 June 2017

Welcome investment into the wellbeing of young Canberrans

The 2017-18 ACT Budget recognises the importance of youth mental health, but falls short of addressing youth unemployment and a lack of affordable housing for young Canberrans.

“We are pleased to see a number of positive initiatives focused on early intervention and prevention for young people at risk of mental health issues. We believe these measures have the potential to alleviate some of the growing pressure on youth mental health services in the Territory,” said Rebecca Cuzzillo, Policy Director of the Youth Coalition, the peak body for youth affairs in the ACT.

While Treasurer Andrew Barr highlights jobs growth, a stronger local economy and the success of our higher education sector as big achievements for the Territory, the Youth Coalition believes more needs to be done to ensure that younger members of our community can share in these opportunities.

“Canberra is becoming increasingly expensive for young people and there is a lack of pathways in to jobs. If we want to see continued sustainable growth of the local economy, we need focused investment that addresses both youth unemployment and the lack of affordable housing.”

“The Treasurer highlights that higher education is one of our biggest exports, but young people should be able to continue a life in the ACT beyond their formal education. That is only possible if young people can find work and afford to live here.”

Education inequity remains an issue for the Territory and the Youth Coalition will continue to call for a whole of community approach to addressing education inequity and recognition of the skills, knowledge and expertise of community services in supporting students who are at risk of disengaging from school.

“We support the focus on education equity through the new Future of Education project, but we are disappointed that there is little investment included in this budget to address the inequities in our education system.”

“We are concerned that the five new school psychologists will be employed by the Education Directorate, and will therefore not be available to provide support to children and young people outside of school hours and during school holidays.”

For further comment please contact Rebecca Cuzzillo on 02 6247 3540