

# Youth Housing and Homelessness Forum Minutes

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**Date:** 23 April 2024

**Time:** 9:30-11am

**Location:** In person & online

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## Attendance

Joel Artup - Youth Coalition of the ACT  
Erin Barry - Youth Coalition of the ACT  
Renea Moriarty - Barnardos  
Hannah Watts - Education Directorate  
Lee-Anne Rogers - Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing  
Cyndy Newman - Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation  
Malcolm Towney - Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation  
Alicia Twohill - Education  
Josh Smith - Housing ACT  
Matthew Wilson - MCCG (Safe & Connected Youth)  
Kwadwo Owusu - St Vincent de Paul  
Andrew Rich - Oasis  
Stacey Bright - Raw Potential

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## Agenda Items

### 1. **Acknowledgement of Country**

Joel opened the meeting by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people as the Traditional Owners and continuing Custodians of the lands of the ACT, and paid respect to the past, present and future Elders, families and ancestors.

### 2. **Guest Speaker: Lee-Anne Rogers, Office for Mental Health & Wellbeing**

The OMH&W are interested in understanding the needs of young people experiencing co-occurring mental health and AOD use including options for earlier intervention as well as addressing those young people with complex needs.

Young people experiencing homelessness often have needs across multiple service system. One of the pieces of work the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing is undertaking is a review of the support needs of people (of all ages) with co-occurring mental health and alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues. The need for greater connection and coordination between different services can be hard to achieve and people with

complex needs across multiple systems face significant challenges in being able to get their needs met in a timely and effective way.

In the 2023-24 budget the ACT Government provided funding to enhance the connections between the mental health and AOD services to improve outcomes for people with co-occurring conditions. One of the pieces of work funded is to undertake a scoping study on the service responses in the ACT that might best address the needs of people with severe mental illness and AOD use.

Lee-Anne asked YHHF members about their experiences of supporting young people with co-occurring mental health and AOD issues; what early intervention looks like; how young people with more complex needs could be better supported; and discussed models being used in other jurisdictions.

Detailed consultation notes have been provided to Lee-Anne to inform the OMH&W project. Key themes included:

- The presence of trauma (including intergenerational trauma); and correlation with AOD use, mental health concerns and homelessness. Multidisciplinary programs are needed that will work with the whole young person. Undiagnosed disabilities and behavioural issues can also be a factor.
- Barriers accessing support from mental health services until AOD use stops – this can lead to young people becoming more unwell and more likely to self-medicate.
- Barriers accessing early intervention support – families need more support, and greater wraparound support earlier. Schools and sporting groups may be key early intervention mechanisms. Important to consider what response is needed: mandatory reporting is not always helpful and can be harmful.
- Workers are seeing children and young people begin experimenting with AOD at younger ages.
- Impact of COVID: younger cohorts of young people have experienced high levels of social disconnection through adolescence.
- Need to look across the spectrum from early support, to people with more severe and complex needs, not just at either end.
- Homelessness services know when young people are unwell or becoming unwell; but are often not listened to by tertiary mental health services when trying to advocate for young people.
- Young people are often discharged too early from hospitals and without safety plans. Services are willing to be part of safety plans, but need to be included in the process.
- Culturally diverse young people who are unaccompanied minors and may not have other supports may need extra support.

- Need for protocols in place for supporting First Nations young people, regarding reaching out to ACCOs. ACCOs work in a wraparound approach where young people are; and hold cultural knowledge and connection with young people.

### **3. Service Update**

#### **a. Josh Smith – Housing ACT**

- i. Two people in Youth Housing Team – Josh and Grace
- ii. The purpose / function of the team is to help young people navigate through the system and get housed.
- iii. Referrals for young people to community-based support services.

#### **b. Matthew Wilson – Safe & Connected Youth**

- i. Reunification program with an accommodation element; to provide early intervention to YP to prevent future youth homelessness.
- ii. Safer Youth Response Service – 18 month pilot related to MACR – working with ACT Policing. Currently prioritising 10-12 age group, but will be increased to 14 with the MACR. Working with the crisis response team to find suitable interim accommodation before starting support with the families.

#### **c. Kwadwo Owusu – St Vincent de Paul**

- i. Program supporting migrants and refugee backgrounds – navigating complexities of education system and broader community.
- ii. Youth program working with young people with carer responsibilities – providing respite etc.

#### **d. Hannah Watts – Education Directorate**

- i. More school youth worker roles are coming up, with more in-school wellbeing funding. Lots happening in recruitment.
- ii. Senior Youth Work Team is going to a mental health in schools conference next month
- iii. Services can reach out to the Senior Youth Work Team as a resource connection for schools

#### **e. Andrew Rich – Oasis**

- i. YEAN running well, providing youth crisis accommodation for young people aged 16-25.
- ii. Salvation Army is the preferred respondent for the support service and property management services for Canberra. Will share program model once contracts have been finalised. Aiming to be operational 1 July.

#### **f. Renea Moriarty – Barnardos**

- i. Our Place and Friendly Landlord Service. FLS will go over to Oasis, currently focusing on transitioning the young people.
- ii. Our Place retained until June 2025 – waiting to see what happens with the Youth Foyer at Woden.
- iii. Happy to be contacted directly re discussion of referrals.
- iv. Requirement for young people to be engaged in education, employment or training – however, since Covid, some of the mode of delivery has changed from

face-to-face to online; so there is some lenience.

**g. Malcolm Towney and Cyndy Newman - Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation**

- i. Recent passings of First Nations people in ACT and surrounding areas has had a large impact on community. Young people and families being advised that GGYAC can provide support at any time.
- ii. Referrals are open at any time – please reach out.
- iii. Reconnect Team - trying to connect with teachers and wellbeing workers in schools
- iv. CEO finishing soon over next month; and Amanda Savle the Deputy Director has also resigned.
- v. Intensive Family Support Team is a new team with two case managers and a team leader. They started 2 weeks ago; and will be focusing on supporting families with elements such as a roof over your head, food on the table, education.

**h. Joel Artup and Erin Barry - Youth Coalition**

- i. Justin finished in February after 6 years to move to new ACT Government position.
- ii. Joel is the interim CEO to support operations, staff and support recruitment of the new CEO.
- iii. The Job Ad closes on 3 May after which short-listing and interviews will occur quickly. Looking towards June / July start date for candidate, depending on their availability.
- iv. Our latest sector bulletin can be found here: [The Youth Coalition of the ACT \(campaign-archive.com\)](https://www.youthcoalition.net/campaign-archive.com)
- v. To stay up to date with what we are doing subscribe to our sector bulletin here: <https://www.youthcoalition.net/>