



Youth Coalition of the ACT

ACT Budget 2006/07 - Budget Analysis



Youth Coalition of the ACT 2006 / 07 ACT Budget Analysis

Diamonds in the Rough: the ACT Government Budget 2006/07

The Youth Coalition of the ACT 2006/07 Budget Submission listed 17 recommendations, based on consultations with young people and youth services, to better support young people by addressing critical gaps in youth services in the ACT.

This budget has very few youth specific initiatives.

This document is a summary and analysis of the ACT Government's 2006/07 Budget. It highlights the 'diamonds' and the 'roughs' for young people and the youth and community sectors.

Roughs:

The Youth Coalition is shocked at the proposed closure of 39 schools in the ACT. We particularly note the immense impact this will have upon students and their families who will face not only increased costs but also the emotional impact of displacement from their current school communities. We also recognise the long-term impacts of creating larger schools as potentially increasing the risks of students becoming a number and being lost in the system.

The higher transport times for students will also impact on their ability to engage in extra-curricular activities which will further reduce their ability to be active members of both their school and neighbourhood communities. Finally, we do not believe that the \$1 million per year for the next four years to support the transition of students to other schools will be sufficient, considering the large scale of school closures.

The Youth Coalition is highly concerned with the lack of clarity around the future of the Human Rights Commission including the Commissioner for Children and Youth people. In the previous budget, the ACT Government made a commitment to the establishment of a Commissioner for Children and Young People. This has been an ongoing recommendation of the Youth

Coalition and was also a recommendation from the *Territory as Parent* (Vardon Report).

While we welcome the ACT Government's fulfilment of their election commitment of \$30 million for public housing stock, we do note, however, that this increase in housing stock is accompanied by a tightening of eligibility criteria, a significant decrease in Housing ACT staff and the proposed sale of 500 properties.

We are also concerned that the budget has revealed that \$70,000 was transferred from the Renew Community infrastructure and Facilities Grant to the Groovin' in Garema lunch-time entertainment program.

The ACT government's lack of commitment to funding new initiatives in the alcohol and other drugs sector has left young people without adequate service delivery across the service delivery continuum. No training or sector development funds have been allocated to the youth sector to support young people who are presenting with increasingly complex issues, such as dual diagnosis of mental health and alcohol and other drug issues.

Diamonds:

The Youth Coalition welcomes the few new initiatives in this year's ACT Government Budget.

The Youth Coalition is pleased that the long awaited 3.7% indexation for youth and community services will begin on 1st July 2006. This was a recommendation in the Youth Coalition's budget submission. Indexation is a positive step forward in the process of addressing critical sector viability issues in the youth and community sectors. However, we continue to urge the ACT Government to address community sector wages and conditions to ensure the best possible quality of service delivery for young Canberrans.

Young people in the ACT will now have increased access to short and long term twenty-four hour residential supported accommodation and day support. This will assist in filling the accommodation gap for young people with mental health issues.

We applaud the ACT Government for implementing its election commitment by committing \$30 million to increase public housing stock over three years. However, as noted above, this comes with a \$13 million cut to Housing ACT's budget.

We are pleased that the ACT Government has adopted our recommendation to fund mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiatives, particularly in regards to training for youth workers through Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) Training and Community Mental Health Education.

The Youth Coalition commends the increased funding of Home and Community Care programs that will enable people to continue to live in the community. Similarly, we are pleased that the ACT Government has matched Commonwealth funding to reduce the number of younger people with disabilities in aged cared facilities.

The Youth Coalition supports the streamlining of contract management and reporting, reducing the burden on community sector organisation to meet contractual requirements. We are also pleased that this comes in conjunction with the establishment of the ACT GrantLink Portal that will centralise all information on grants programs operating in the ACT.

ACT Government Budget 2006/07: Diamonds in the Rough

ACT HEALTH			
Initiative, paper, page	Description in budget	First year funding (2006-07)	Comments and / or Concerns
<p>Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention (Budget Paper 3, page 74)</p>	<p>This initiative provides for Integrated Perinatal and Infant Care, Workplace Health Promotion, Early Rehabilitation Support, Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) Training and Community Mental Health Education. This will strengthen the implementation of prevention and early intervention strategies in mental health, as called for in the National Mental Health Strategy.</p>	<p>\$758,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND:</p> <p>The Youth Coalition supports this initiative and the principle of investing in mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention.</p> <p>We support the inclusion of children of parents with a mental illness as a key target group within the mental health system.</p> <p>We hope the training and community education will include young people and the youth sector.</p> <p>We hope this initiative will also include dual diagnosis.</p> <p>We would look forward to further information on this initiative.</p>
<p>Home and Community Care Growth (Budget Paper 3, page 74)</p>	<p>Additional support services will be provided to assist people to remain in the community. Home and Community Care services include domestic assistance, community transport, meals on wheels, social support, personal care and respite for carers.</p>	<p>\$1,803,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND:</p> <p>The Youth Coalition supports people being given support to live in their communities and support for those who care for them.</p>

<p>Mental Health Capacity</p>	<p>This initiative will provide additional access to specialist mental health services in both hospital and community settings, reduce delays for those seeking mental health care, provide early intervention strategies and increase the involvement of consumers and carers in the planning of mental health care. The initiative will provide for enhanced mixed short and long-term 24 hour residential supported accommodation and day care support for young people. The short-term accommodation includes a “step-up/step-down” option as an alternative to acute admission.</p>	<p>\$1,200,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND:</p> <p>The Youth Coalition welcomes this initiative. Our budget submission highlighted the need for a residential respite alternative to ensure a continuum of care for young people. We are pleased to see that the ACT Government has recognised this need and committed funding for this initiative.</p> <p>We look forward to hearing about how this initiative will be rolled out.</p> <p>ROUGH: The Youth Coalition is concerned that capital funds have not been allocated towards this initiative. We look forward to hearing further details about how this initiative will be implemented.</p>
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DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITY, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Initiative, paper, page	Description in budget	First year funding (2006-07)	Comments and / or Concerns
<p>Helping Younger People with Disabilities in Residential Aged Care Services (Budget Paper 3, page 78)</p>	<p>This is a joint ACT Government and Australian Government commitment to reduce the number of younger people with disabilities living in residential aged care facilities. This is the ACT component of the program. The Australian Government has matched this funding. This will provide funding for people with disabilities living in residential aged care facilities to be supported in accommodation that meets their individual support needs in a way that is age-appropriate. It will also provide funding for more appropriate support for young people who remain in an aged care facility and to enable people with disabilities to remain in their home as they age.</p>	<p>\$110,000 (support) \$144,000 (capital)</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports increased funding for younger people with disabilities to meet their individual support needs in a way that is age-appropriate.</p> <p>We would look forward to further information on this initiative.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition also notes that there are no people under the age of 25 are currently living in aged care facilities.</p>

<p>Indigenous Representative Body (Budget Paper 3, page 78)</p>	<p>This initiative will supplement agency support for the development and implementation of an agreed model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the ACT. Consultation with the community will continue to determine electoral guidelines, governance arrangements and an implementation process.</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports the development of Indigenous representative models and the ACT Government's commitment to consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop an appropriate model.</p> <p>ROUGH: We question how consultations will be conducted over the next financial year when no new funding has been allocated until 2007/08.</p>
<p>ACT GrantLink Portal (Budget Paper 3, page 78)</p>	<p>The Government will establish ACT GrantLink, a grants portal to improve community understanding and accessibility to the grant schemes available, and provide a whole of government grants register.</p>	<p>\$100,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports the streamlining of processes and supporting youth and community organisations to better access information about grant programs in the ACT.</p>
<p>Renew Community Infrastructure and Facilities Grant (Budget Paper 4, page 557)</p>	<p>Significant funding was transferred from community facilities maintenance and upgrade funds to running Groovin' in Garema (a lunch time entertainment program run through CMD)</p>	<p>\$70,000</p>	<p>ROUGH: We question placing lunchtime entertainment over the needs of community organisations, considering ongoing upgrade and maintenance needs of many community facilities.</p>
<p>Office of Children, Youth and Family Support (Budget Paper 4, page 556)</p>	<p>The Office will be integrated into DHCS</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition is pleased that the Government is now committed to the permanent placement of OCYFS with DHCS.</p>

<p>Streamlined Community Sector Service Purchasing (Budget Paper 3, page 79)</p>	<p>Funding agreements between Government and the community sector will be simplified, and made more effective in partnership with the community. Appropriate contract performance measures and reporting mechanisms will be further developed and refined.</p>	<p>\$300,000 (only 12 months funding)</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports streamlining of contractual processes. Simplified reporting mechanisms will lessen the administrative burden on already under-funded youth services.</p> <p>We would like details about how youth services will be involved in the development of this initiative.</p> <p>We would like further details about how this initiative will be rolled out over a 12 month period.</p>
<p>Recurrent Funding for Minosa House (Budget Paper 3, page 79)</p>	<p>This initiative provides funding for Minosa House, an eight-bed crisis service for single men on the Ainslie Village site. Minosa House was previously funded as a pilot program through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.</p>	<p>\$387,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports this initiative, particularly considering the current housing crisis and the lack of men’s services in the ACT.</p>

<p>Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)</p>		<p>ROUGH: The Youth Coalition is disappointed that there has been a net cut of over \$1 million to SAAP. While we recognise that there has been a cut of \$300,000 from the Commonwealth and a diversion of \$387,000 to Minosa House, the ACT Government has reduced their total contribution to SAAP Services by over \$1 million. We do, however, welcome the ACT Government's commitment that no fewer beds will be available given the funding cuts and call on the ACT Government to similarly ensure that the quality of SAAP services will not be reduced. Finally, we anticipate that the process for determining future levels of funding will be fair, accountable and transparent.</p>
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<p>Integrated Indigenous Service Delivery (Budget Paper 3, page 79)</p>	<p>This initiative will develop and foster an integrated and coordinated approach to service delivery across identified health, education and family support services. The initiative will focus on at-risk Indigenous children and young people's education, health and well being. This initiative is aimed at improving outcomes for these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their families, particularly in regard to strengthening the children's transition to school and their transition from primary to high school by improving the way that ACT Government services work in partnership with families.</p>	<p>\$136,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition welcomes this prevention and early intervention initiative, given the poorer educational outcomes and the over representation of Indigenous young people in the care and protection and juvenile justice systems/ We look forward to hearing how the ACT will be implementing this measure.</p>
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Initiative, paper, page	Description in budget	First year funding (2006-07)	Comments and / or Concerns
<p>Pacific Schools Games (Budget Paper 3, page 81)</p>	<p>This initiative provides for the planning and organising of the Pacific Schools Games in 2008. The Games is a significant international multi-sports event for primary and secondary students. Hosting the Games will provide an opportunity to showcase the unique qualities of the national capital and demonstrates the Government's commitment to increasing opportunities for students to participate in healthy physical activities.</p>	<p>\$550,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports this initiative to provide opportunities for local young people to participate in an international competition – particularly by providing opportunities for students to participate in healthy physical activities.</p>

<p>Towards 2020 Renewing Our Schools - Transitional Assistance (Budget Paper 3, page 81)</p>	<p>This initiative provides for the management of the <i>Towards 2020: Renewing Our Schools</i> program. It will provide assistance to students affected by school closures with their transition to new schools, minimising the impact on students and families. This assistance may include supplementation to parents and students for transport, uniform and other costs associated with transferring to a new school.</p>	<p>\$1,000,000</p>	<p>ROUGH: The Youth Coalition is shocked at the proposed closure of 39 schools in the ACT. We particularly note the immense impact this will have upon students and their families who will face not only increased costs but also the emotional impact of displacement from their current school communities. We also recognise the long term impacts of creating larger schools as potentially increasing the risks of students becoming a number and being lost in the system. Further, we are concerned that the \$1 million per year for four years to support the transition of students to other schools will be insufficient, considering the large scale of school closures.</p>
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DEPARTMENT OF TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Initiative, paper, page	Description in budget	First year funding (2006-07)	Comments and / or Concerns
<p>Drought Affected Sportsgrounds (Budget Paper 3, page 84)</p>	<p>Over 40 hectares of identified drought affected sportsgrounds will be restored to a fully operational condition under this initiative. This will involve a range of tasks including aerating, weed control, fertilising, seeding and topdressing. This work will help to bring back into operation a number of sportsgrounds that have become unsafe due to hard or uneven surfaces. As many of these grounds are adjacent to primary schools, it will also help to enhance students' physical education activities.</p>	<p>\$500,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports the revitalisation of sportsgrounds particularly in regards to increasing opportunities for young people to participate in healthy physical activities and maintaining public spaces for young people.</p>

<p>ACT Accessible Taxi Scheme (Budget Paper 3, page 86)</p>	<p>This initiative will improve taxi services for people in wheelchairs who are unable to use standard taxis. The reliability and timeliness of services will be improved with an anticipated reduction in waiting times for wheelchair accessible taxis (WATs) and a decreased incidence of WATs failing to arrive. The payment of a \$10 lift fee to drivers of WATs will be extended to all WAT hirings. The initiative will also partially meet the cost of more closely managing the wheelchair accessible taxi fleet, and will involve linking pre-booked wheelchair hirings to improve timeliness of pick-ups.</p>	<p>\$220,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports increased ability for people in wheelchairs to access taxis in a timely and reliable manner.</p> <p>ROUGH: We do note, however, that this is only a small step towards addressing significant transport barriers facing people in wheelchairs.</p>
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<p>Additional Staffing for the New Civic Library (Budget Paper 3, page 86)</p>	<p>This initiative provides additional staffing for the new three-level Civic Library, scheduled to open in late 2006. As part of the Civic Library/Link Project, the new Civic Library will be over 70 per cent larger than the existing library and provide improved and expanded services to people living and working in Civic and surrounding areas. It will offer enhanced services to a broad range of community members, including children, the multicultural sector and older residents in inner Canberra.</p>	<p>\$409,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports additional funding for the New Civic Library and looks forward to receiving further information about how initiatives will be developed for young people.</p> <p>ROUGH: The Youth Coalition would like further details on the amalgamation of library services in the ACT and how this impacts on young people's access to libraries, including the use of library as a public space. Removing access to the internet and computer resources assumes universal IT access and therefore further increases the digital divide.</p>
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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Initiative, paper, page	Description in budget	First year funding (2006-07)	Comments and / or Concerns
<p>Child Protection Legal Support (Budget Paper 3, page 87)</p>	<p>This initiative provides for additional legal resources to the ACT Government Solicitor to maintain adequate representation of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support in urgent and complex applications to the Court for orders to protect children in need of care. It will help deliver improved outcomes in protecting children in need of care and ensure that the interests of the child are properly regarded in court processes. This initiative also involves an additional staff member in the Magistrates Court Conferencing Unit to meet a significant increase in applications for child protection since 2003-04.</p>	<p>\$250,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports this overdue initiative of an additional staff member for the conferencing unit.</p> <p>ROUGH: While we welcome this measure, we do note that there are ongoing issues in the care and protection system and that further funds are required to address this.</p>
<p>Human Rights Commission (Budget Paper 4)</p>			<p>ROUGH: We are disappointed and concerned that the future of the Human Rights Commission is unclear. This Commission was to include the Commissioner for Children and Young People. We eagerly await further clarification from the ACT Government on this matter.</p>

<p>Alexander Maconochie Centre Set up Costs (Budget Paper 3, page 88)</p>	<p>This initiative will allow for the set up of the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) prior to the Centre being fully commissioned in January 2008. It will provide for the recruitment and training of additional staff, a range of necessary consumables, such as staff uniforms and prisoner clothing, the transportation of prisoners from NSW correctional centres, and the transitional overlap of operations at the Belconnen Remand Centre and the AMC.</p>	<p>\$500,000</p>	<p>DIAMOND: The Youth Coalition supports a human rights approach to the planning and operation of the AMC.</p> <p>ROUGH: The planning phase of the AMC should include youth and community services. Training initiatives need to include the community sector. There must also be provision for adequate transitional programs for those returning to the ACT and support for their families, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>
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MEDIA RELEASE

6th May 2006

Rough Ride for Students and their Families as 39 schools close

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs condemns the decision by the ACT Government to close 22 schools by the end of the year.

39 schools including 22 preschools, 15 primary schools, 1 high school and 1 college will all close by the end of 2008.

Meredith Hunter, Executive Officer said, "The impacts on children, young people and families in the ACT will be monumental, we need to consider issues of travel, loss of neighbourhood connectedness, de-stabilising children's education, the frightening transition to a new environment, the list goes on."

"Higher transport times impacts on children and young people's ability to participate in cultural, recreational and homework activities. This against the Government's commitments made in the ACT Social Plan, the Children's Plan and the Young People's Plan."

"By creating large schools, children and young people are at risk of becoming a number and getting lost in the system. Making educational outcome tracking more difficult and allowing more students to fall through the cracks. Personalised relationships between teaching staff, parents and students is a critical factor in achieving successful outcomes."

"Rural children and young people in Tharwa and Hall will have to travel significant distances to attend school. There will need to be dedicated transport and support provided to children, young people and families. Dedicated funding needs to be allocated in the longer term for increased transport costs"

"Skyrocketing petrol costs will further impact on families. What consideration has been given to ensuring that ACTION will be able to respond to the travel needs of students, to ensure that student travel times and bus connections are kept to a minimum?"

"Physical health of children and young people may also be impacted as many of them won't be able to ride their bikes or walk to school, this flies in the face of the ACT government's push for children and young people to be more physically active."

For further comment, please contact Meredith Hunter on 0400 088 904



MEDIA RELEASE

6th June, 2006

A Tick for Community Sector Indexation

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, is pleased that the ACT Government Budget will implement its prior commitment a new community sector method of indexation for 2006/07.

“We look forward to this commencing on 1 July 2006.” said Ms. Meredith Hunter, Executive Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT.

“This initiative is much needed, youth services under the Youth Services Program missed out on indexation all together in the 2002/03 Budget.”

“Youth services are already behind and the community sector needs to have its major issues of viability addressed.”

“We believe that sector viability, of which indexation is a part, is pertinent to all priorities of the ACT Young People’s Plan, particularly that young people are supported and have access to high quality, appropriate and integrated service delivery responses.”

“Youth services continue to face increased and more complex client loads as well as insufficient funding for training, recruitment and retention of workers within the sector.”

“The new indexation measure is a step forward in addressing sector viability issues but we continue to urge the ACT Government to address community sector wages and conditions in order to ensure recruitment and retention of qualified workers to better support young people in the ACT.”

For further comment, please contact Meredith Hunter on 0400 088 904



MEDIA RELEASE

6th June 2006

A Diamond in the Rough: Mental Health Accommodation for Young People

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, commends the new funding allocated towards increased mental health accommodation for young people.

“Young people in the ACT will now have increased access to short and long term 24 hour residential supported accommodation and day support. This will assist in filling the accommodation gap for young people with mental health issues.”

Meredith Hunter, Executive Officer of the Youth Coalition, said, “This is a long overdue increase of vital accommodation services for young people in the ACT.”

“The Youth Coalition’s budget submission highlighted the need for a residential respite alternative to ensure a continuum of care. We are pleased to see that the ACT Government has recognised this need and committed funding for this initiative.”

For further comment, please contact Meredith Hunter on 0400 088 904



MEDIA RELEASE

6th June 2006

Budget Rough on Dual Diagnosis

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, says, “The ACT Budget handed down today fails to adequately support young people experiencing dual diagnosis (alcohol and other drug and mental health issues).”

“Research has found that up to 90% of people presenting at mental health and alcohol and other drug services experience dual diagnosis.” Said Meredith Hunter, Executive Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT.

“Adolescence is a time in a person’s life when mental health issues can commonly manifest and for experimental alcohol and other drug use to occur. It is therefore critical for dual diagnosis prevention and early intervention initiatives to be funded.”

“The Youth Coalition’s budget submission highlighted the need for more resources to be allocated towards young people experiencing dual diagnosis. However, the ACT Government has ignored this recommendation.”

“We need early intervention and prevention initiatives, and targeted training for youth workers, particularly those in youth supported accommodation services to better address these needs.”

“The Youth Coalition’s budget submission called for a dedicated youth Dual Diagnosis worker within ACT Health. It is disappointing that another opportunity has been missed.”

For further comment, please contact Meredith Hunter on 0400 088 904



MEDIA RELEASE

6th June 2006

No Drug Money? Rough deal

Alcohol and other drugs is a significant issue for the ACT community that is not reflected in this year's budget, according to the Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs.

"We are concerned that another budget has allocated no new funding for alcohol and other drug initiatives." Said Ms. Meredith Hunter, Executive Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT.

"Adolescence is a time in a person's life when mental health issues can commonly manifest and for experimental alcohol and other drug use to occur. It is therefore critical for prevention and early intervention initiatives to be funded."

"There are massive gaps in the continuum of service delivery to young people. Currently there is drug education in schools and a rehabilitation service for young people, with little in-between."

"This has a significant impact on the youth sector who is left carrying the load without receiving specific funding to do so."

"No additional training funding has been allocated for the youth sector to support young people who are presenting with increasingly complex issues, including alcohol and other drugs."

The Youth Coalition acknowledges the current fiscal limitations of the ACT Government, however evidence states that prevention is more cost effective than dealing with the impacts after the fact.

For further comment, please contact Meredith Hunter on 0400 088 904



MEDIA RELEASE

6th June 2006

Young People Hit a Rough Diamond with Housing

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, commends the ACT government on fulfilling their election promise of providing 30 million dollars over three years towards Public Housing stock.

Meredith Hunter, Executive Officer of the Youth Coalition, says “The ACT Budget handed down today will start to address the housing crisis faced by young people.”

“Despite this we are concerned with the changes to the eligibility criteria for Housing ACT which includes tightening of income criteria and current residential localities of applicants.”

“Many ACT young people such as students and low income earners currently rent in Queanbeyan for reasons of affordability but access work and education in the ACT. These young people will no longer be eligible for Housing ACT.”

For further comment, please contact Meredith Hunter on 0400-088-904