

DISCUSSION PAPER | MAY 2009

**PLAN  
YOUNG  
A  
FOR  
NEW  
PEOPLE**

STRENGTHENING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ACT





## **DISCUSSION PAPER**

# **AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN**

**2009 – 2014**

ACT Department of Disability, Housing  
and Community Services  
Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

**May 2009**



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# Foreword from the Minister



The ACT Government must plan for the future.

My task as the Minister for Children and Young People is to develop a new *Young People's Plan* and refresh the *ACT Children's Plan 2004 - 2014*.

The *ACT Children's Plan* and the *Young People's Plan* are important frameworks for all of the ACT Government.

The plans articulate the ACT Government's commitment to children, young people, their families and community. As well as providing a common policy framework for service provision, they guide the practical implementation of services across government, non-government agencies and within the community.

All young people contribute to our community in unique and innovative ways. I envisage that the plans will reflect the diversity of the community and young people's lives. I hope young people, community, youth services and other government services will have a say, through this Discussion Paper and future consultations, about the new *Young People's Plan*.

I will be asking the Youth Advisory Council, the Youth Coalition of the ACT, and the Children and Young People Commissioner to play a central role in enhancing the participation of children and young people in the Plan's development.

Young people tell me they are worried about their health and well being, drug and alcohol use, the environment and sustainability. Through the development of the Plan these issues will be addressed.

The ACT Government aims to support child and youth friendly planning of our city by incorporating the principles of child and youth friendly planning.

I want young people's opinions on what the new *Young People's Plan* says about life transitions, particularly transitions from school into training, work and university. I envisage that there will be a renewed focus on wellbeing and safety and a greater focus on sustainable jobs and living.

I will be seeking stronger alignment between the *Children's and Young People's Plans*, with a focus on transition points in children and young people's lives. This alignment of policy planning will in turn help us to identify gaps in services and policies. These are long term plans – so that this year of action becomes a decade of achievement.

**Andrew Barr**  
**ACT Minister for Children and Young People**  
**May 2009**

## 1. Introduction

This Discussion Paper is a starting point. It provides children and young people with an initial opportunity to comment on the directions and priorities for the new *Young People's Plan 2009-2014*. It is one of a number of mechanisms to engage young people and other community members in the development of the Plan to be launched later this year.

This paper has been prepared by the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support (OCYFS), Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS).

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC) Article 1* defines a child as:

*"a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier".*

This Discussion Paper, defines a young person as between 12 and 25 years of age.

### How to make comment

The ACT Government invites written comment on the issues raised in this Discussion Paper. Questions raised are a guide to key issues. Additional comments, no matter how brief or expansive, are welcome.

All responses will be received in confidence. If you are not willing to have your comments attributed to you, please make this clear when providing comment.

Comments may be mailed to:

**Youth Directorate  
Office for Children, Youth and Family Support  
Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services  
GPO Box 158  
CANBERRA ACT 2601**

Comments may be emailed to: [submissionsocyfs@act.gov.au](mailto:submissionsocyfs@act.gov.au) or to [youthinteract@act.gov.au](mailto:youthinteract@act.gov.au).

Comments or inquiries may be made by telephoning: **02 6205 4369**.

The closing date for written comments is  
**Thursday 23 July 2009.**

## 2. Background

The *ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008* (the Plan) was developed with close reference to the *Canberra Social Plan*. The goals of the *Canberra Social Plan* were to:

- **invest** in children and young people;
- **increase** participation, engagement and the achievement of children and young people; and
- **improve** the transition between school, further study, and the workforce.

The *Young People's Plan 2004-2008* expressed the ACT Government's commitment to young people and provided a whole-of-government policy framework for all young people, based on the themes of Participation, Access, Transitions and Support.

The *ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008* incorporated two key policy documents: the *ACT Government Commitment to Young People 2004-2008 (the Commitment to Young People)* and the *Blueprint for Young People 'at risk' 2004-2008 (the Blueprint for Young People)*.

The *Commitment to Young People* specified key actions in relation to young people's school completion rates, and the provision of targeted and effective vocational training.

The *Blueprint for Young People* targeted vulnerable young people aged 12-25. It explained how government could enhance support, improve coordinated assistance and strengthen age specific support.

The *Young People's Plan 2004-2008* acknowledged the importance of the *Human Rights Act 2004* and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC)* for young people in the ACT. The ACT Government is committed to ensuring human rights principles inform the development of the new Plan.

The ACT Government has committed to a new Plan for the ACT's young people that builds on the achievements of the 2004-2008 Plan and addresses the needs identified by young people in the community. The new Plan will guide community members, government and non-government agencies and assist in collaboratively building a community that is genuinely inclusive of young people.

### **3. ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008**

The vision of the *ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008* was to strengthen opportunities for all young people in the ACT. This vision was advanced through four key directions of: Participation, Access, Transitions and Support.

#### **Participation**

This direction supports opportunities for young people to be engaged in activities and programs that encourage and develop informed decision-making, skills development and leadership abilities. Young people are valuable members of the community and are encouraged to engage and contribute in varied and meaningful ways.

#### **Access**

Young people require equal access to community resources. This is only possible with accessible information on a range of topics and relevant services. The different access requirements for young people relate to age, gender, cultural origin, disability, sexuality, sub-culture and geographic location. These access requirements are considered and reflected in service delivery responses and the provision of information within the ACT.

#### **Transitions**

Transitions are any significant milestone a young person may face, including the move from education to employment, from family to independent living, from childhood to adolescence to adulthood and from economic dependence to economic independence.

#### **Support**

Young people should be supported and have access to high quality, appropriate and integrated services. Young people's strengths are identified and acknowledged as a foundation to work towards desired goals. Young people have the right to make individualised choices about the services and support they are receiving, whether from government agencies or community organisations.

## 4. What did the *Young People's Plan 2004-2008* deliver?

The ACT Government has met the key strategic priorities outlined in the *Young People's Plan 2004-2008*, the *Blueprint for Young People* and the *Commitment to Young People*.

Achievements include:

### Improving Engagement and Participation

#### *Youth InterACT Strategy*

The *Youth InterACT Strategy* was expanded. This improved engagement with children and young people in the following ways:

- The *Strategy* was re-designed and the ACT Government's Youth webpage was developed. Children and young people can access information about scholarships and grants via this website.
- A consultation register was made available for government agencies to consult with young people on topical issues.
- Young people are also able to directly ask the Minister for Children and Young People questions through the website.
- The Youth Advisory Council has been expanded to include fifteen members from diverse backgrounds.
- The annual Youth InterACT Conference, organised and coordinated by the Youth Advisory Council, has increased its participation rate by 200% between 2007 and 2009.

#### *National Youth Week*

National Youth Week is held each year during March/April. Young people are encouraged to participate through organising an event or volunteering.

Participation in National Youth Week has increased, both in the ACT and around Australia. Approximately 45 events are held across the ACT each year. These include: art exhibitions, expos, sporting events, fashion parades and competitions.

National Youth Week coincides with the celebration and recognition of young people's achievements in the ACT through the Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Awards.

## 4. What did the *Young People's Plan 2004-2008* deliver? (cont)

### Improving Young People's Access to Services:

#### *Expansion of Junction Youth Health Services*

The ACT Government committed \$1.9 million to expand youth health services at the Junction Youth Health Centre to provide for better youth health services in the Belconnen, Gungahlin and Tuggeranong regions.

#### *Construction of Civic Youth Centre*

A new youth centre in Civic was constructed as part of the redevelopment of Section 84, Civic and was opened in August 2005. The Youth Centre incorporates the Junction Youth Health Service which is co-located in the Club 12/25 building.

Young people were consulted on the redevelopment of the youth centre and its facilities and played a key role in the launch of the centre, Club 12/25.

#### *Addressing Youth Homelessness*

The ACT Government continues to support Youth Supported Accommodation Services throughout the ACT. A Youth Homelessness Working Group was also established and a Youth Homelessness Action Plan has been developed. The Action Plan builds on previous research into youth homelessness in the ACT. Importantly, it outlines a series of actions in early intervention alternatives and longer term housing options.

#### *Establishing a Mental Health Step Up Step Down Facility*

The ACT Government implemented the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Australia and provided funding for the first youth *Step Up Step Down* mental health facility. The model provides an alternative to acute admission. Specifically, it ensures young people with mental illness have access to early intervention and support.

### Improving Transitions for Young People

#### *Developing 'Every Chance to Learn' Curriculum Framework*

A new curriculum framework *Every Chance to Learn* was introduced in 2007 into preschools, primary schools, high schools and colleges. It has 26 essential learning achievements which address skills, careers planning and transition supports for students.

#### 4. What did the *Young People's Plan 2004-2008* deliver? (cont)

The framework outlines the areas and outcomes the ACT community believes is essential for all students to learn. It lays the foundation for high curriculum standards in all ACT schools and allows principals and teachers to tailor their own lesson plans and teaching strategies to reach these essential learning achievements.

##### ***Establishment of Frameworks Daytime Support Service for Young People with a Disability***

*Frameworks*, a new daytime support service, was established in 2006. This program provides community access, community inclusion and community development services for people with a disability who have left school.

Additionally, funding is provided to family based support initiatives. These initiatives enable families to plan their future, and place families in control of the resources available to them.

#### **Increasing Support to Young People**

##### ***Funding Pastoral Care Coordinators and Youth Workers in Schools***

In 2007, the ACT's 17 government high schools received \$14.6 million over a four year period, for new pastoral care coordinators, social workers, community nurses and disability workers to promote student welfare.

The funding assisted Canberra's teenagers who were at risk of leaving school before they complete Year 10. The funding was also used to establish three specialised programs, which intensively supported students to improve their skills and self confidence and self esteem.

##### ***Building Bimberi Youth Justice Centre***

Bimberi, the first human rights compliant youth justice centre in Australia, was completed in 2008. The new Centre replaced Quamby Youth Detention Centre and accommodates up to 40 young people aged from 10 to 18 years and up to 21 years in some circumstances.

The Centre includes education and vocational programs, indoor and outdoor recreation and health services. A Program and Services model has been developed. This model focuses on case management and endeavours to support young people to meet social development goals and successfully transition young people back into the community.

#### 4. What did the *Young People's Plan 2004-2008* deliver? (cont)

##### *Enacting the Children and Young People Act 2008*

The *Children and Young People Act 2008* was enacted in 2008 and replaced the *Children and Young People Act 1999*. The new Act focuses on:

- the care and protection of children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect;
- the employment of children and young people; and
- children and young people who have offended, including children and young people in detention.

It also established more accountability processes in relation to services provided to children and young people, and expanded the role of the Children's Services Council to formally include youth services.

These are just some of the many achievements of the *ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008*. A key success over the last four years as a result of the *Young People's Plan* has been a discernable lift in the level of youth participation in the issues that affect them.

The *Plan* supported genuine youth participation and expanded partnerships between young people, government and community.

Through the *Plan*, the government has also boosted the resources, activities and opportunities available to young people.

## 5. Snapshot of Young People in the ACT

### Population

Canberra is a city with a young population. In 2006, people aged between 12 and 25 made up 21.47% (69,575) of the Canberra population. Canberra continues to have a higher proportion of young people than the national average.

Population	ACT %
population aged 12-25 years	21.47%
females aged 12-25 years	20.61%
males aged 12-25 years	22.36%

Source: AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, Australian Capital Territory (STE 8) 2357.9 sq. Kms; Data cube B04, AGE BY SEX

### Education

Up to 90.38% of all young Canberrans aged 12 to 24 are either engaged in fulltime or part-time study, ranging from secondary, technical, university or other tertiary education. In addition, ACT Schools have the highest attendance rates for years 7 to 12 at 89%, with the National average 75%.

Education	ACT %
young people engaged in secondary education aged 12-18	73%
young people engaged in technical or further education aged 15-24 fulltime	2.7%
young people engaged in technical or further education aged 15-24 fulltime	2.3%
young people engaged in university or other tertiary education aged 15-24 fulltime	4.8%
young people engaged in university, or other tertiary education aged 15-24 part time	3.9%
Other type of educational institution	3.68%
total number of young people aged 12-24 years engaged in some form of education	90.38%

Source: AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, Australian Capital Territory (STE 8) 2357.9 sq. Kms; Data cube B14 TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION ATTENDING (FULL/PART-TIME STUDENT STATUS BY AGE) BY SEX

### Indigenous Youth Population

Indigenous young people make up 1.6% of the ACT population aged 10 to 25. Indigenous young people are more likely than other young people to experience disadvantage and require added support to reach their full potential.

Indigenous Youth Population	Indigenous Males	Indigenous Females	Total Indigenous persons
10-14 years	270	207	477
15-19 years	219	198	417
20-24 years	183	181	364
<b>Total</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>1258</b>

Source: AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, Australian Capital Territory (STE 8) 2357.9 sq. Kms; Data cube B07 INDIGENOUS STATUS BY AGE BY SEX.

## 5. Snapshot of Young People in the ACT (cont)

### Youth Homelessness

The number of homeless school students in the ACT aged 12 to 18 is estimated to be 148. This is based on the 2006 Census Homeless School Students.

### Young carers

4% of young people aged 15 to 24 years have some caring responsibilities for a relative with a chronic illness, disability or aged related problems. Young carers are more likely to experience compounding factors such as poverty and social isolation. These factors can detrimentally affect their participation in education, social activities, community life and health and wellbeing.

Source: AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, Australian Capital Territory (STE 8) 2357.9 sq. Kms; Data cube B20 UNPAID ASSISTANCE TO A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY (a) BY AGE BY SEX

Young Carers	Number of persons in the ACT aged 15-24	Total number of Young Carers
15-24 years	51,169	2093
<b>Total %</b>		<b>4%</b>

### Gross Weekly Income

The majority of young people aged 15 to 19 years earn \$1- \$149 (gross income) per week, with the majority of 20 to 25 year olds earning \$400 to \$599 (gross income) per week.

Gross Individual Weekly Income	<i>Females 15-19 Years</i>	<i>Females 20-24 Years</i>	<i>Males 15-19 Years</i>	<i>Males 20-24 Years</i>
Negative/Nil income	3,317	833	3,996	951
\$1-\$149	3,882	1,105	3,421	928
\$150-\$249	1,266	1,751	1,085	1,517
\$250-\$399	921	1,977	1,109	1,736
\$400-\$599	719	2,287	883	2,731
\$600-\$799	258	2,000	312	2,070
\$800-\$999	84	1,796	95	1,792
\$1,000-\$1,299	5	804	32	1,054
\$1,300-\$1,599	4	96	6	215
\$1,600-\$1,999	0	26	0	69
\$2,000 or more	7	13	11	57
Individual income not stated	912	757	1,261	1,016
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,375</b>	<b>13,445</b>	<b>12,211</b>	<b>14,136</b>

Source: AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, Australian Capital Territory (STE 8) 2357.9 sq. Kms; Data cube B16, GROSS INDIVIDUAL INCOME (WEEKLY) BY AGE AND SEX.

## 5. Snapshot of Young People in the ACT (cont)

### Unpaid Voluntary Work

Between 2005 and 2006 18% of young people aged 15 to 24 undertook unpaid voluntary work through an organisation or group.

Unpaid Voluntary Work	Number of persons in the ACT aged 15-24	Total number of Young people engaged in voluntary work
15-24 years	51,169	9708
<b>Total %</b>		<b>18%</b>

Source: AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, Australian Capital Territory (STE 8) 2357.9 sq. Kms; Data cube B18 VOLUNTARY WORK FOR AN ORGANISATION OR GROUP (a) BY AGE BY SEX

### Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities

Overall ACT young people typically have higher levels of participation in cultural and leisure activities than their national counterparts.

Cultural Activities	% of Young people engaged in Cultural activities
<b>Total 37.9%</b>	

Australian Bureau of Statistics cat no. 4901.0 Children's Participation in cultural and leisure Activities, Table 1. Summary of Activities by States or territories -2006  
 Australian Bureau of Statistics cat no. 4901.0 Children's Participation in cultural and leisure Activities, Table 1.

Attended Performing Arts Event	% of Young people who attended an arts event
<b>Total 44.4%</b>	

Summary of Activities by States or territories -2006

Sport	% of Young people engaged in Sport
<b>Total 70.7%</b>	

ABS cat no. 4901.0 Children's Participation in cultural and leisure Activities, Table 1. Summary of Activities by States or territories -2006

Leisure Activities	% of Young people engaged in Leisure activities
<b>Total 100%</b>	

Australian Bureau of Statistics cat no. 4901.0 Children's Participation in cultural and leisure Activities, Table 1. Summary of Activities by States or territories -2006  
 Please note: leisure activities includes Homework or other study Reading for pleasure Art and craft, playing

Computer and Internet Usage	%
Accessed the Internet	72.7%
Used a computer but not the Internet	23.7%
<b>Total %</b>	<b>96.6%</b>

electronic or computer games Watching TV, videos or DVDs, Bike riding Skateboarding or rollerblading.  
 Australian Bureau of Statistics cat no. 4901.0 Children's Participation in cultural and leisure Activities, Table 1. Summary of Activities by States or territories -2006

## 5. Snapshot of Young People in the ACT (cont)

<b>Visited Public Library</b>	% of Young people who visited a public library
<b>Total 57.5%</b>	

Australian Bureau of Statistics cat no. 4901.0 Children's Participation in cultural and leisure Activities, Table 1. Summary of Activities by States or territories -2006

<b>Visited Museum or Art Gallery</b>	% of Young people who visited museum or art gallery
<b>Total 60.0%</b>	

Australian Bureau of Statistics cat no. 4901.0 Children's Participation in cultural and leisure Activities, Table 1. Summary of Activities by States or territories -2006

### Living with Parents

In 2006, 59% of all 15–24 year olds lived with their parents. While the Census count of the population aged 15–34 years remained about the same between the 1996 and 2006 censuses, the number of young people living with their parents grew by 8%.

The number of dependent students increased by 14%, while the number of non-dependent children increased by 3%.

<b>Living with Parents</b>	Number of persons in the ACT aged 15-24	Total number of young people living with their parents
15-24 years	51,169	30,189
<b>Total 59%</b>		

## 6. Developments in other Jurisdictions

A brief overview of Commonwealth, State and Territory youth policies and strategies is provided. Further information on each jurisdiction's youth policies can be found via links in the References section of the Discussion Paper.

### Victoria

#### *Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians*

*Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians* reflects the broad range of activity across government for young Victorians aged 12 to 25. It brings together a "Top 40" list of initiatives which are grouped under five specific desired outcomes. These are:

- contributing and making a difference;
- achieving potential through informed choices;
- having resources and making connections;
- managing healthy active diverse lives; and
- being safe and promoting safe behaviours.

*Future Directions* aims to increase the number of young people who:

- contribute more to their communities and want to make a difference;
- make a successful transition from school to a job they like;
- know how to access information, support and services they need;
- lead healthy, active and culturally diverse lifestyles; and
- live in a secure environment and choose safe behaviours.

These are priorities that the community, young people and their families have endorsed. The government's role is to provide options and services for young people, as well as ensuring their rights are respected and they have real opportunities to build meaningful careers and lives.

### South Australia

#### *Youth Action Plan*

The *Youth Action Plan* is South Australia's framework for ensuring that young people are considered and participate in the delivery of South Australia's Strategic Plan, to which it is closely aligned, ensuring that young people are involved in shaping South Australia's future.

This overarching framework links to the South Australian *Youth Action Plan 2005 to 2010*. South Australia's *Youth Action Plan* has 18 'key goals' and one or more are dealt with as part of 6 interconnected *South Australia's Strategic Plan* objectives.

These 18 goals directly respond to the issues identified by young people, the community and government agencies. South Australia's *Youth Action Plan* seeks to achieve better outcomes for all young people through:

## 6. Developments in other Jurisdictions (*cont*)

- improved responses in 18 key goals;
- more responsive and coordinated government approaches to issues affecting them; and
- increasing the capacity of the government and community to respond to identified goals.

A summary of objectives and goals of *South Australia's Strategic Plan Objectives* and *Youth Action Plan Goals* and how they align can be found by viewing the full document via the link in this References section of this Discussion Paper.

### **New South Wales**

#### ***NSW Youth Action Plan***

The *NSW Youth Action Plan* sets out the NSW Government's plans to support young people to reach their full potential. The NSW Government recognise that young people need support to maintain good health and wellbeing, access to education and strong community networks.

It also recognises that young people are a diverse group, whose needs differ according to their social, economic and cultural backgrounds and their support requirements.

The policy has been developed to inform young people, their families and organisations about the outcomes the NSW Government seeks for young people. It provides strategic direction and an overview of activities for young people under a single framework. Parallel with the aim of this policy is a commitment that vulnerable young people get the additional support they need, which is the focus of the *Better Futures Framework*.

The *NSW Youth Action Plan* outlines many of the steps the NSW Government will take to help achieve these ideals, with a focus on prevention and early intervention. The Plan also places huge importance on increasing opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making and in the design and delivery of public services.

The five themes in the *NSW Youth Action Plan* are closely related. This means that young people, their families and communities, and government need to work together across a range of areas to give young people the opportunity to lead full and positive lives.

This will be achieved through the following five themes:

- Belonging to family and community;
- Learning and earning;
- Feeling good and staying healthy;
- Engaging in culture, sport and recreation; and
- Feeling and being safe.

## 6. Developments in other Jurisdictions (*cont*)

### Northern Territory

#### *Building a Better Future for Young Territorians*

The Northern Territory Government released its youth policy framework *Building a Better Future for Young Territorians* in April 2003. The framework outlines a whole of government approach to the delivery of programs and services to young people.

The framework has five directions that guide service and program delivery in the Territory. Key issues and priority actions have been identified for each of these actions.

The framework contains key principles which underpin policies, programs and service delivery for young people.

These principles are:

- Respect;
- Diversity;
- Access;
- Empowerment;
- Equity; and
- Co-ordination.

The framework comprises five key directions and identifies priority actions against each direction.

The five directions are:

- Improve young people's health and wellbeing;
- Improve access to education and employment for young people;
- Provide more opportunities for young people to have fun and develop new skills;
- Make sure that young people are able to participate in decisions that affect their lives; and
- Create communities where young people can feel safe and secure.

Government agencies report on progress against each of the directions. *The Building a Better Future for Young Territorians* outcomes are presented in an annual program report to the community. In addition, they report on any new initiatives developed in response to emerging needs.

This framework communicates, the *Building a Better Future for Young Territorians Youth Action Plan* vision to all young people living in the Northern Territory.

## 6. Developments in other Jurisdictions (*cont*)

### Western Australia

#### *Young People's Work Plan*

The Department for Communities' Office for Youth are currently developing a Young People's Work Plan for 2009-11, which incorporates the planning of programs, the development of partnerships and allocated funding to address young people's issues.

The Department for Communities' Office for Youth have identified the following five priority areas:

- Improving mental and emotional wellbeing;
- Increasing drug and alcohol awareness;
- Changing community perceptions of young people;
- Enhancing the lives of young people with disabilities; and
- Providing support for young carers.

The Office for Youth is currently in the process of collating all submissions, and will publish a report on the outcomes in the near future.

### Queensland

#### *Strategic Policy for Youth 2007-2011*

The goal of Queensland's youth policy is for young people to be valued, respected and supported to achieve their potential, have a positive future and be involved in their communities.

#### *Policy Priority Areas:*

- Providing opportunities for young people to participate in making decisions which affect their lives;
- Providing young people with access to leadership and development opportunities;
- Supporting young people at risk to overcome challenges & adversity;
- Holding young people accountable for offending behaviour, diverting them from the criminal justice system where possible and supporting their ongoing development.

#### *Key Focus from 2007-2009:*

- Further integrating services for young people at risk;
- Improved opportunities for ATSI young people;
- Planning for youth services and infrastructure to meet changing community profiles;
- Ensuring contemporary legislation, quality programs and services for the youth justice system;
- Assisting young people through key transition points; and
- Strengthening the youth sector at local, regional, statewide levels.

### Tasmania

Information with regard to Tasmania's youth policy was not available at the time of writing this Discussion Paper.

## 6. Developments in other Jurisdictions (*cont*)

### Commonwealth Priorities

#### *Participation*

The Australian Government is committed to enhancing young people's participation and in 2008 created the Australian Youth Forum.

The Australian Youth Forum (AYF) is run by the Australian Government as a communication channel between the government, young people (aged 15 to 24) and the organisations that work with, for and on behalf of young people (also known as the youth sector).

It's about engaging young people and the youth sector in ongoing public debate and getting their input into policy and decision making on issues that affect young people's lives now and in the future.

The AYF engages young people through its website [www.ayf.gov.au](http://www.ayf.gov.au), and also in person at forums and community activities. It brings young people, the youth sector and the Australian Government closer together, and gives them an opportunity to be heard.

#### *Homelessness*

##### *Green Paper*

The Australian Government's Green Paper on Homelessness '*Which Way Home?*' was released by the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 22 May 2008.

The paper aimed to promote public discussion on homelessness, highlight the challenges faced by people who are homeless and suggest ways forward. Submissions were invited to inform development of a White Paper to address the Australian Government's national plan of action on homelessness to 2020.

##### *White Paper*

*'The Road Home: A national approach to reducing homelessness'*, the Australian Government's White Paper on homelessness, was released by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and the Minister for Housing Tanya Plibersek in December 2008.

The White Paper outlines the Australian Government's strategy to halve homelessness by 2020 and provide supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it. The White Paper outlines interim targets for 2013.

Funding for the strategy sees the Australian Government committing to a 55 per cent increase on the current investment in homelessness, representing an additional \$800 million over four years. This funding includes a commitment to additional social housing for homeless people of \$400 million over the next two financial years.

## 6. Developments in other Jurisdictions (*cont*)

### *Compact with Young Australians*

In April 2009, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to establish a Compact with Young Australians. Under the terms of the Compact, every Australian under the age of 25 will have a guaranteed education or training place. This education and training guarantee will ensure anyone under the age of 25, including those who lose their job, will be able to take part in further education or training.

The Compact is based upon three core principles:

1. Anyone under the age of 17 must be earning or learning, that is in full time school, training or work.
2. If you are under the age of 20 and are not working, you will be provided with a training place with the first priority - a year 12 or equivalent VET qualification;
3. If you are under the age of 25 and you are not working you are guaranteed a training place to ensure you have the skills needed to be part of the recovery.

The Australian Government anticipates that the Compact with Young Australians will provide up to 135,000 young people with higher qualifications.

The Compact puts education and training front and centre to ensure Australia's future productivity.

## 7. Young People's Priorities

From our recent consultations, young people want to live in a community that acknowledges their contribution, listens to their views and is accessible and inclusive of them.

During 2008 and 2009 the Youth Advisory Council and the ACT Government have been consulting with young people by asking what issues are important to them, what they value, what concerns them, and whether they are able to access youth services.

The outcomes of surveys indicate young people are concerned about:

### **The environment**

*"The biggest priority of the ACT Government on behalf of young people is to provide them a sustainable future, so the plan should focus on sustainable environmental measures and solving the economic crisis".*

### **Alcohol and drug use (particularly 'binge drinking')**

### **Health and wellbeing (particularly mental health)**

*"There should be more health services for young people like the Junction Youth Health Services, but in Tuggeranong and Woden".*

### **Support for young people in sport and recreation**

*"The government should provide more sporting facilities like the AIS on the southside of Canberra".*

### **Transitions from school, to work or study, or moving from living with your family to independent housing**

*"Have more youth support workers in schools and at youth centres".*

### **Developing skills and leadership**

*"The new plan should have a provision that there should be at least one young person on all advisory groups and bodies, that way young people are always being heard".*

### **Technology (Internet)**

*"The fact that the Minister is on Facebook is great, but maybe the Plan should incorporate more Ministers to be on Facebook, or better mediums that make them more accessible to young people"*

*"Maybe have ads on Myspace".*

## 7. Young People's Priorities (*cont*)

### *Mission Australia Survey*

The annual Mission Australia Survey 2008 focuses on:

- What Young People Value;
- Issues of Concern;
- Where Young People go for Advice and Support;
- Community Participation; and
- Who Young People Admire.

2,558 young people responded to this survey. The highest area of concern against the five criteria were:

What young people value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Family Relationships;</li><li>▪ Friendships (other than family); and</li><li>▪ Physical and Mental Health.</li></ul>
What Issues are of Concern to Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Drugs;</li><li>▪ Family Conflict; and</li><li>▪ Suicide.</li></ul>
Where Young People go for Advice and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Friends;</li><li>▪ Family; and</li><li>▪ Relative/Family friend.</li></ul>
Community Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Sports;</li><li>▪ Arts/Cultural eg drama, music and dance; and</li><li>▪ Sports (as spectators)</li></ul>
Who Do Young People Admire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Family;</li><li>▪ Friends;</li><li>▪ Sports teams, players and coaches.</li></ul>

### *Youth InterACT Conferences*

The Youth Advisory Council co-ordinate an annual Youth Conference with approximately 200 young people in attendance. The Conference working groups look at specific issues of importance to young people.

## 7. Young People's Priorities (*cont*)

For the last three years topics have included:

- Mental health and wellbeing;
- Youth debt;
- Elimination of discrimination;
- Homelessness and poverty;
- Housing affordability;
- Alcohol and drug awareness;
- Binge drinking;
- Crime and restorative justice;
- Environment and sustainability;
- Recreation;
- Health;
- Living in a multicultural Canberra;
- Perception of youth in the media;
- Cyber bullying; and
- Environment – a climate for change.

These forums specifically identify issues of concern to young people and possible solutions to these issues.

More information on the forums and outcomes of the forums can be found under the References section of this Discussion Paper.

## 8. Development of New *Young People's Plan*

### Themes

The key themes for the *ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008* were:

- Participation;
- Access;
- Transitions; and
- Support.

From initial consultation these themes appear to continue to be relevant for young people in the ACT. Another theme, identified through consultation, as important to young people seems to be sustainability and the environment.

### Key questions

*Do you think the four key themes of Participation, Access, Transitions and Support remain relevant for young people in the ACT?*

*Are there other key themes that you consider are important for young people?*

*Are some themes more important to you than others?*

*The priorities outlined in the ACT Government Commitment to Young People and the Blueprint for Young People 'at risk' have been met by the government.*

*Should the government include separate policy or themes to meet the needs of young people who are considered 'at risk'?*

### Priorities

From consultation undertaken to date priorities identified by young people include:

1. Sustainability, our environment and 'green-collar' jobs;
2. Health and wellbeing, including mental health and alcohol use;
3. Sport and recreation;
4. Transitions from school, work, study and from home to independent living; and
5. Technology, including participation and access.

## 8. Development of New *Young People's Plan (cont)*

### Priorities

A number of forums involving young people have also identified some other priorities for action, including:

#### Housing affordability and homelessness

*"The ACT Government should have an interest in providing a single multi platform information centre with the purpose of facilitating young people's entry to the housing market. This centre could be largely web-based and feature (but not limited to) information about government housing options and support services, what young people's rights are and what they can expect in the housing market, tips for buying and renting, tips for living on ones own and explicit advice on what young people can do to maximise their chances of successfully buying or renting".*

*"There should be more information and education at school level of budgeting and basic financial skills. There should be better connections with subjects like maths to real life situations".*

#### Entertainment and recreation

*"The government needs to specifically have tourism targeted to young people in order to break the perception of Canberra as a boring place to live".*

*"The new Young People's Plan needs to have ways of putting young people on the map. Have more mainstream gigs, more large outdoor events to attract young people to Canberra – not Floriade".*

#### Perceptions of Youth in the Media

*"Government social responsibility campaigns need to move away from the conventional shock tactics, and focus more on the realistic social outcomes of certain behaviours".*

*"Editorial guidelines for media outlets in the reporting of stories involving young people, calling on outlets to be more realistic and balanced in their portrayal of young people".*

## 8. Development of New *Young People's Plan* (cont)

### Priorities (cont)

#### Cyber-bullying

*"Don't bully, one of the main actions that young people can take is not to be a bully themselves or encourage other bullies, but if they do see bullying to report it to an adult".*

*"Have consequences – in schools there needs to be higher consequences for people doing the wrong thing while using cyber technology, this would help people realise how serious cyber bullying is".*

#### Services to young people

*"Hel lines should be there more to listen than provide advice as there is too much pressure to tell them the problem".*

*"Better advertising and awareness of youth services in Canberra".*

#### Increased access to public space

*"The new Youth Plan should include youth space provision in the new developments around Canberra. The suburbs around Gungahlin and the new Molonglo development should all have specific youth spaces designed by young people".*

### Key questions

*Do you agree with these priorities? What order would you place these in?*

*Which are the most important to you?*

*Do you think there should be other priorities?*

*Do you think these priorities are inclusive of all young people?*

*What additional priorities and actions would include more young people?*

## 9. Links with the *ACT Children's Plan*

The development of the *Young People's Plan* and the *ACT Children's Plan* are important complementary guides for whole of government. They articulate the ACT Government's commitment to children, young people and families.

There are a number of synergies across the *ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008* and the *ACT Children's Plan*. Some of these include:

- Appointment of a *Children and Young People Commissioner*;
- Providing quality education for children and enhancing young people's involvement in education and training;
- Improving the health and wellbeing of our children and providing information and services to increase personal health and wellbeing for young people and their families;
- Improving housing options for children and their families and improving young people's access to safe, secure affordable and appropriate accommodation with the necessary supports to live as independently as possible within our community; and
- Helping the community view children as unique and valuable citizens with equal rights and maximising opportunities to promote the achievements and contributions of young Canberrans.

The ACT Government is anticipating stronger alignment between the *ACT Children's Plan* and the new *Young People's Plan* with a particular focus on transition points in children and young people's lives, and monitoring health and well being outcomes for all children and young people.

In order for this to be achieved it is envisaged that the new Plan will be in place until 2014 when the *ACT Children's Plan* expires.

A closer alignment between the two plans would provide an opportunity for the ACT Government to develop a set of overarching principles and goals to guide whole of government work, including policy and services, for children and young people.

With overarching and consistent principles, children and young people could be better served by more cohesive services, and by targeting the most important issues.

The *ACT Children's Plan* has focussed primarily on early childhood 0-8 years. Traditionally initiatives emerging from the *ACT Young People's Plan* have a focus on young people aged 12 to 25 years.

## Links with the *ACT Children's Plan (cont)*

A life path approach where the focus is on all the important transitions could serve children and young people more comprehensively.

This would also ensure a greater focus on early intervention and prevention at all stages of the life cycle and provide a platform for broad based youth engagement.

At a broad level similar principles are articulated in both the *ACT Children's Plan*<sup>1</sup> and the *ACT Young People's Plan 2004-2008*. These remain relevant and current, and involve substantial synergies.

This provides a significant opportunity to build a more seamless and cross referenced overarching framework for children and young people.

### Key questions

*What are the things that children and young people have in common?*

*Do you think there should be synergies across the ACT Children's Plan and the new Young People's Plan? What do you think they should be?*

*Should there be a focus on transition points in children and young people's lives?*

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<sup>1</sup> The principles of the *ACT Children's Plan* are: prevention and early intervention, child centred, family and community focused, collaborative and well coordinated, strengths based and inclusive and evidence based and accountable.

## 10. Building a Child and Youth Friendly City

The ACT Government supports child and youth friendly planning of our city and region. The government will continue to incorporate the principles of child and youth friendly planning.

*What is a Child Friendly City?*

**It is a city, or any local system of governance, committed to fulfilling children's rights. It is a city where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programs and decisions. It is, as a result, a city that is fit for all.<sup>2</sup>**

A child friendly city is a youth friendly city. The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities (CFC) Initiative builds upon the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* by promoting practical methods for improving the built environment in order to recognise and reflect the needs of children and young people.

Under the Convention, all levels of government are required to ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

The CFC Initiative defines a child friendly city as a “local system of good governance committed to fulfilling children’s rights” and involve children in the planning and operation of their city.

The ACT Government would like feedback on how the new *Young People’s Plan* can build on the recent commitments undertaken by the *ACT Children’s Plan* Interdepartmental Committee (IDC), to build Canberra as a child and youth friendly city. This may include incorporating the theme *Building a Child Friendly City*.

Actions may include:

- Assess, improve and audit how well Canberra is meeting UNICEF’s *Child Friendly City* Initiative;
- Review and recommend a new governance structure for whole of government coordination for children, young people and families;
- Improve the capacity of the ACT Government to monitor children and young people’s health and wellbeing, development and learning in order to inform and improve decision making, policy development and service delivery; and
- Build a shared vision for the collaboration and integration of services for the ACT community.

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<sup>2</sup> Unicef, Child Friendly Cities Initiative.

## 10. Building a Child and Youth Friendly City *(cont)*

The ACT Government will also continue to consult with young people about the development of the community, particularly youth spaces, such as Edison Park in Woden, youth centres and services, and on key policy and legislative initiatives such as lowering the voting age, increasing the school leaving age, and combating bullying.

### **Key questions**

*What would make Canberra a child and youth friendly community? Please provide examples.*

*Do you think it's important to incorporate information about being a child and youth friendly city in the new Young People's Plan?*

*How should the government involve young people?*

## 11. Governance, Outcomes Measurement & Reporting

A Governance structure which oversees both the *ACT Children's Plan* and the new *Young People's Plan* is under consideration. Quality and responsive services that meet the needs of children and young people and their families requires a governance structure that enhances whole-of-government coordination.

An enhanced governance structure that oversees both plans would also aim to maximise mechanisms for children, youth and community participation.

Improving the monitoring and reporting of outcome indicators for children and young people's health, well-being, development and learning, will help the government, community and young people plan for the future and look at what we have achieved.

It will also assist us to see how effective the *Young People's Plan* is and will allow the government to prioritise key areas of importance.

It is also envisaged that parallel reporting and monitoring occur annually through the ACT Legislative Assembly.

### Key questions

*Should there be a single governance structure for both plans? What should this governance structure look like?*

*What type of performance measures should be included in the new Young People's Plan?*

*How can the participation of children and young people be enhanced?*

*How will we know if the Young People's Plan has made a difference?*

*How should outcomes for children and young people be reported?*

## 12. Next Steps

The ACT Government has commenced consultations with young people, and the government will undertake broader consultations with the community, government agencies, children and young people in order to develop directions and priorities for the new *Young People's Plan*.

These consultations will take place at forums, on-line through bulletins such as the Youth Coalition E-bulletin, Youth InterACT E-bulletin, through various media including print press and specific youth publications such as BMA Magazine and S Press.

Consultations will be undertaken in partnership with key community organisations and stakeholders such as the peak youth body, the Youth Coalition of the ACT, the Children and Young People Commissioner and the ACT Youth Advisory Council.

Additionally, research will be undertaken to determine current issues facing the youth of today, and best practice in service delivery.

An outline of the consultation Plan and time frame is available through the DHCS website at [www.dhcs.act.gov.au](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au) or via the Youth InterACT website on [www.youth.act.gov.au](http://www.youth.act.gov.au).

A draft *Young People's Plan* will be released for consultation later this year addressing priorities and strategies.

This Discussion Paper can be downloaded through the DHCS website at [www.dhcs.act.gov.au](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au) or through the Youth InterACT website at [www.youth.act.gov.au](http://www.youth.act.gov.au).

Thank you for your time and we welcome your comments.

## 13. References

### ACT Policies/Plans

*Building our Community – The Canberra Social Plan*  
([www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au))

*The Canberra Plan – Towards Our Second Centenary*  
([www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au))

*ACT Young People Plan 2004-2008*  
([www.youth.act.gov.au](http://www.youth.act.gov.au))

*The Blueprint for Young People ‘at risk’*  
([www.youth.act.gov.au](http://www.youth.act.gov.au))

*ACT Government Commitment to Young People 2004-2008*  
([www.youth.act.gov.au](http://www.youth.act.gov.au))

2004-2005 Action Plan for Young People (hard copy available on request from DHCS)

*ACT Young People’s Plan 2004-2008 Progress Report May 2007*  
[http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/10592/Final\\_Progress\\_Report\\_Young\\_Peoples\\_Plan\\_2004-2008.pdf](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/10592/Final_Progress_Report_Young_Peoples_Plan_2004-2008.pdf)

*ACT Children’s Plan*  
[www.children.act.gov.au](http://www.children.act.gov.au)

Minister for Children and Young People Ministerial Statement April 2009  
<http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2009/week05/1806.htm>

### Surveys and Consultations

A New Plan for Young People Survey 2009  
([www.youth.act.gov.au](http://www.youth.act.gov.au))

Youth Advisory Council Survey 2008

National Survey for Young Australians 2008 - Mission Australia  
(<http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/news/media-releases/862-drugs-a-growing-concern-for-young-australians>)

Youth InterACT Conference Report Take Off 2007  
([www.youth.act.gov.au](http://www.youth.act.gov.au))

Youth InterACT Conference Report Generate 2008  
[www.youth.act.gov.au](http://www.youth.act.gov.au))

## 13. References (*cont*)

### Statistics

Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2006  
([www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au))

### Other Jurisdictions

Victoria  
[www.youth.vic.gov.au](http://www.youth.vic.gov.au)

Queensland  
[www.communities.qld.gov.au/youth/engagement/](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/youth/engagement/)

New South Wales  
[www.youth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.youth.nsw.gov.au)

Northern Territory  
[www.nt.gov.au/health/youth\\_affairs/home.shtml](http://www.nt.gov.au/health/youth_affairs/home.shtml)

Western Australia  
[www.childrenandyouth.wa.gov.au/](http://www.childrenandyouth.wa.gov.au/)

South Australia  
[www.officeforyouth.sa.gov.au/](http://www.officeforyouth.sa.gov.au/)

### International Child and Youth Policy

[www.childfriendlycities.org/about/crc.html](http://www.childfriendlycities.org/about/crc.html)  
[www.childfriendlycities.org/about/index\\_the\\_initiative.html](http://www.childfriendlycities.org/about/index_the_initiative.html)  
[www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm)

### Australian Government Policy

Homelessness  
[www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/pubs/homelessyouth/youth\\_homelessness/Documents/p4.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/pubs/homelessyouth/youth_homelessness/Documents/p4.htm)

Green Paper  
[www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/greenpaper/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/greenpaper/Pages/default.aspx)

Homelessness - White Paper  
[www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/whitepaper/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/whitepaper/Pages/default.aspx)

Participation  
[www.ayf.gov.au](http://www.ayf.gov.au)

Compact with Young Australians -  
[www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2009/media\\_release\\_0942.cfm](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2009/media_release_0942.cfm)



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