



2016 Federal Budget Overview
by the
Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

May 9 2016

STATEMENT

YACWA Members,

On Tuesday May 3 2016, the Federal Government announced its proposed budget, shortly before announcing a double dissolution election to be held on July 2 2016. We conducted a thorough analysis of the available information, and extracted the key commitments and measures that we believe will have a direct impact on young people and the workforce supporting them in Western Australia.

The Budget did not address the most significant barriers facing young people - specifically housing affordability and homelessness, education, and health. YACWA will continue to advocate for young people on these issues, providing information and advice to members throughout the election campaign and after the election.

YACWA would like to see:

- A commitment to establishing meaningful communication with young people, with support provided to the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC), and the restoration of a Federal Minister for Youth
- A commitment to work with specialists in youth work, training, internships, and employment to strengthen and develop the Youth Employment Package
- An immediate commitment to continue Federal funding in the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) beyond 2017
- A commitment to protect young people from the pause in indexation of Medicare Rebates, removing the threat of GP co-payments for under 25s
- A commitment to protect the funds lost through the removal of support for the Headspace Youth Early Psychosis Program (HYEPP) to invest them in other services for young people with complex mental health problems, such as early psychosis. These funds must be used to ensure equitable access, regardless of location.

As a member-based organisation, your voice is important to us, and we encourage you to share your concerns and questions with us about how the budget will affect you or the young people you work with. We commit to conveying the questions and concerns of our members to the Government, and, will continue to work with all levels of government to help them achieve meaningful outcomes for young people.

John Thomson
Acting CEO

To see full details of the 2015 Federal Budget head to the following: www.budget.gov.au

Higher Education Reform — Further Consultation

Measure:

The Federal Government has delayed the Higher Education Reforms introduced in the 2014-15 budget for one year in favour of further consultation. It has also announced it will not proceed with the deregulation of university fees announced in 2014.

Potential Impact:

- For existing students, this delay means no change for at least a year, and no change in what they pay while they finish their university degrees
- There will be ongoing consultation around further options to reduce costs, such as: deregulation of ‘flagship programs’, changes to *Higher Education Loan Program* (HELP) and other measures to increase student contribution equal to the government amount

Comment:

YACWA welcomes the government’s decision to abandon the deregulation of university fees and the desire of the federal government for further consultation before rolling out the Higher Education Reforms introduced in the 2014-15 budget.

We are, however, concerned by measures that have not been ruled out, including:

- Deregulation of certain flagship programs (courses) at a greater cost for students
- HELP debt repayment rates rising
- Students being required to repay HELP loans earlier and at a lower threshold

We urge the Government to ensure that measures are developed and implemented with equitable parameters around this reform.

Further Information:

- [Higher Education Research and Reform Amendment Bill, Bill Digest](#)
- [Discussion Paper: Driving Innovation, Fairness and Excellence in Australian Higher Education, May 2016](#)

What Others Have Said:

- [Minister for Education & Training, Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham - Media Statement](#)
- [Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research & Industry Senator the Hon Kim Carr - Media Statement](#)
- [Group of 8 \(Go8\) Media Statement](#) - The Group of Eight (Go8) comprises Australia’s eight leading research Universities

Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPPP) — Efficiencies

Measure:

Funding cut of \$152.2m over four years to the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPPP). This program funds universities to develop initiatives to improve participation in higher education by underrepresented and disadvantaged people.

Potential Impact:

- This will result in significantly decreased support and much less opportunity to engage in further education for the following populations:
 - Low SES backgrounds
 - People with a disability
 - Indigenous Australians
 - Regional and remote areas
 - Non-English speaking backgrounds
- This measure will create a greater divide in society between those with easy access to education, and those who face multiple and/or complex barriers.
 - This goes against the Australian Government's [commitment](#) to embedding fairness and equitable access to university for all Australians, removing barriers for those underrepresented, and supporting people from all backgrounds to participate in tertiary education.

Comment:

YACWA urges the Federal Government to restore funding to HEPPP to ensure that students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds are encouraged and supported to take part in tertiary education. We believe that all Australians - despite their background and circumstance - should have equal access to Australia's higher education system.

What Others Have Said:

- [Universities Australia - Media Statement](#)
- [Regional Universities Network \(RUN\) - Media Statement](#)

Further Information:

- [Higher Education Participation Programme \(HEPP\)](#)

School Funding — Additional Funding for Students with a Disability

Measure:

\$118.2m for schools to support students with disability from 2016-2017. This is additional funding to the current 'students with disability loading' provided through the *Australian Education Act 2013*.

Potential Impact:

- This will see students with disabilities receive greater support aligned with the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (see link below).
- Details regarding the implementation of this additional funding are yet to be provided, including how schools will be tasked with ensuring that their initiatives are aligned with the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, and how these will be regulated and monitored.
- It is not clear yet how much of this funding will be allocated towards WA schools.

Comment:

YACWA welcomes any additional funding to support students with disabilities. We support any positive step towards ensuring greater fairness and equity in education, particularly for young people who face significant barriers in accessing and engaging with appropriate, quality education.

However, we are concerned with how the additional funding will be implemented at a school-level, with such details having yet to be provided by the Federal Government. YACWA calls on the Government to provide clarification on the allocation and implementation of activities relating to these additional funds in Western Australia.

What Others have said:

- [Minister for Education & Training, Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham - Media Statement](#)
- [Shadow Minister for Education, the Hon. Kate Ellis MP - Media Statement](#)

Further Information:

- [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#)

To view the full Education & Training Budget commitments, [Click Here](#)

Youth Employment Package

Measure:

\$840m over four years for a Youth Employment Package. A lot of public attention has focused on one of the measures; the PaTH program. However, the Employment Package has 3 elements. You can read more about the package in our [Policy Position paper](#).

Potential Impact:

- The measures will prevent young people engaged in jobactive from being forced into the Work For The Dole program after 6 months, extending it to 12 months.
- There is provision of opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurial endeavours
- The measures introduce an employability program that will provide mandatory training and voluntary subsidised internships.

Comment:

YACWA recognises the positive step away from the Work for the Dole program represented in this budget announcement, however, the lack of clarity about the development and implementation of some elements of the package causes concern for the potential to exploit vulnerable young people.

What Others have said:

- [Minister for Employment, Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash - Media Statement](#)
- [Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Brendon O'Connor - Media Statement](#)
- [ACOSS Media statement](#)

Further information:

- [YACWA Position Paper](#)
- [ACOSS Position paper](#)

To see the full Employment Budget commitments, [Click Here](#)

Domestic and Family Violence — New Initiatives to Break the Cycle of Violence

Measure: \$100m in new funding over 3 years to reduce the cycle of violence against women and children. This measure will focus on new initiatives and programs to empower women and their children, and provide targeted support for Aboriginal, as well as culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) people.

The measure will align with the *Third Action Plan 2015-2018* of the [National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020](#), and is closely linked with with the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

Potential Impact:

- The \$33.3m per annum is significantly lower than the [\\$12.6b](#) that domestic and family violence cost the Australian economy over the 2014-2015 period.
- This additional funding will not provide enough investment to ensure that the social services and community sector is able to deliver specialist domestic and family initiatives that support women and children affected by domestic and family violence.
- Our members tell us that current critical services in the area are inadequately funded and resourced.

Comment:

YACWA acknowledges that the investment of new funds into combatting domestic and family violence demonstrates the Federal Government's recognition of the importance and prevalence of this issue in the community. It is clear that this area needs more funding, however, that alone will not create systemic change. YACWA calls on the Government to pledge resources and effective societal responses to support the social services and community sectors to deliver much-needed prevention, early intervention and support programs and initiatives for women and children experiencing the threat of family and domestic violence.

What Others have said:

- [Prime Minister the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP - Media Statement](#)
- [Shadow Minister for Women Senator Claire Moore - Women's 2016 Budget Statement](#)

Further Information:

- [Third Action Plan 2015-2018 'Driving Change: Intervening Early' - National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020](#)
- [Sydney Morning Herald Comment - 'Talk will not do it alone: money needed for domestic violence effort'](#)

Investment Approach to Welfare - Try, Test and Learn Fund

Measure: \$96.1 million over four years from 2016-17 for a new Try, Test and Learn Fund to test the effectiveness of innovative policies aimed at reducing long-term welfare dependency amongst specific populations.

Potential Impact:

- This measure provides an opportunity to develop solutions for specific populations, with the aim of reducing the dependency on long term welfare.
- Additional funding for Business, Government Departments, and the Not-For-Profit Sector will be provided, so organisations can apply for funds to run programs and services in this area.

Comment:

YACWA welcomes an explorative approach to helping those at risk of long term welfare dependency get assistance, particularly for young people. However, there is a danger that this significant investment will stay with the private sector partner engaged to conduct the study, and the vital knowledge and experience of the community sector will not be used in the creation of solutions for this complex problem.

YACWA calls on the Federal Government to utilise an evidence based approach to the allocation of funds, and to encourage recipients to share their learning, both successes and failures, in order to develop an Australian body of knowledge on this topic.

YACWA further asks that the government ensure that the experiences and opinions of all sectors are equally called upon and engaged.

What Others have said:

- [Minister for Social Services, the Hon. Christian Porter MP - Media Statement](#)

Further Information:

- Department of Social Services [information](#) about the fund

To see the full Social Services Budget commitments, [Click Here](#)

Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors - Additional Funding

Measure: The Federal Government will provide an additional \$12.1 million in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 for the provision of relevant care, supervision and support services of unaccompanied humanitarian minors (UHMs) under the *UHM Programme* (see link below).

The *UHM Programme* caters for the welfare of minors on certain visas in Australia without a parent or legal guardian, who fall under the auspices of the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*, and by which the Minister for Immigration and Border acts as the legal guardian.

Potential Impact:

- Unaccompanied humanitarian minors will have access to much-needed holistic, needs-based social services and support
- Service providers and community organisations will be contracted to provide services under the *UHM Programme*, however further details regarding the implementation of this initiative have yet to be provided.

Comment:

YACWA welcomes the additional funding by the Federal Government to provide greater support to unaccompanied humanitarian minors, which we believe is one of the most vulnerable groups in the community. However, the continued offshore detention and processing of refugees must end immediately, with the costs associated with this inhumane policy diverted to meeting Australia’s moral requirements to allow refugees the opportunity to settle in Australia.

“Dealing with refugee flows in a fair and humane manner is part and parcel of being a democratic country in the affluent industrialised world. Sometimes there is simply no acceptable alternative to this” ([O’Sullivan, 2016](#)).

YACWA calls on the Government to provide additional information regarding the implementation of the *UHM Programme*, and how it will enable the social services and community sector to provide the best possible support for this very vulnerable group.

Further Information:

- [About the Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors \(UHM\) Program](#)

To see the full Immigration & Border Protection Budget commitments, [Click Here](#)

Decrease in Medicare Rebates - Efficiencies

Measure:

The government will achieve efficiencies of \$925.3m over two years from 2018 by extending the pause on indexation of Medicare Benefits Schedule of fees for all services provided by General Practitioners, medical specialists, allied health professionals and other health practitioners.

Potential Impact:

- GPs will have to make a choice to either pass on a cost to patients, or incur a loss against previous years' income.
- This cost could result in a reduction in the number of GPs offering a bulk billing service.
- A GP co-payment could further reduce the already low number of young people engaging regularly with a GP.
- It is important to note that this measure has been in place for two years and the government has announced it will continue from 2018 to 2020.

Comment:

Our members tell us that young people are not accessing mainstream health care services because of the associated costs, instead relying on the services provided by Emergency Departments. This often results in young people not receiving the appropriate treatment required, places further burden on stretched public services, and creates negative stereotypes of young people. We also know that people who face barriers when accessing health care often have poorer general health, and are less likely to engage in preventative care. It is critical that the Government provides the necessary support to all people, to ensure equitable access to health care services.

YACWA calls on the government to protect vulnerable young people by exempting additional payments to students and health care card holders, by investigating other revenue raising measures associated with private health insurance for high earners.

What Others have said:

- [Minister for Health, The Hon. Sussan Ley - Media Statement](#)
- [Shadow Minister for Health, The Hon. Katherine King MP - Media Statement](#)
- [Australian Medical Association \(AMA\) - Media Statement](#)

Further Information:

- [Interview with AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, 666 ABC, 4 May 2016](#)
- [The Royal Australian College of General Practitioner's President Dr Frank Jones - Sydney Morning Herald](#)

To see the full Health Budget commitments, [Click Here](#)

WHAT ISN'T IN THE BUDGET?

No commitment to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) - Efficiencies

What we know:

- The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness was allocated 2 years of federal funding in a last minute confirmation during March last year.
- The partnership invested \$115m nationally per year into homelessness services that focus on early intervention and breaking the cycle of homelessness by improving and expanding service response.
- WA was allocated \$30m over two years from the federal government, matched by the State Government.
- There was no additional funding announcement post 2017 in this year's federal budget.

Potential Impact:

- Uncertainty for key services, like [Foyer Oxford](#), that provide assistance to many vulnerable young people facing homelessness and concentrate on breaking the cycle of homelessness, reducing churn through crisis services.
- Uncertainty for the homelessness sector, including young people who rely on these services, and for whom long-term transitional accommodation is part of their planned journey into independence.
- This will have follow-on effects in homelessness and domestic violence organisations
- The removal of NPAH funding will have a significant impact on the ability of the homelessness sector to achieve positive outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness, as demand on crisis and medium-term transitional accommodation services is already above capacity.

Comment:

NPAH funding was introduced in 2009 by a Government who recognised the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) funding was not enough to break the cycle of homelessness. Critical services currently funded under a NPAH agreement, operating under uncertainty for some time, will see this as another missed opportunity to secure the future of homelessness services for young people in Western Australia.

It is difficult to draw any conclusions about the omission of NPAH in the federal budget. The WA state budget, to be released on 12 May 2016, may shed some light on this issue as there may not yet be an agreement between Federal and State Governments.

Further Information:

- You can read about the Western Australia Project Plan for NPAH by [Click Here](#).
- [About the National Youth Coalition for Housing \(NYCH\)](#)
- [Homelessness Australia](#) - the national peak body for homelessness in Australia

No Funding for the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) - Efficiencies

What we know:

- The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) is the peak body for the 4.3 million Australians aged 12-25, and the hundreds of thousands of Australians who work to support them.
- AYAC undertakes a range of activities including research and policy development, youth sector development, and youth engagement.
- AYAC has traditionally been funded through the Federal Government, however, this funding was removed in 2014 and no new funding was allocated in the 2016 Federal Budget.

Potential Impact:

- No federal peak body to represent the views of young people in advocacy and policy discussions relating to young people is very concerning
- The removal of the funding for AYAC adds a barrier to coordinating national activities between all Youth Peaks across the country.

Comment:

The lack of restoration of funding for AYAC in this budget represents a complete disregard on the part of the Federal government for the voice and opinions of young people, and for the organisations and community service and youth workers that support them.

There are some tentative positive outcomes for some young people in this federal budget, however to provide these and yet simultaneously continue to deny young people and their advocates an independent voice at a national level smacks of tokenism.

YACWA urges the federal government to establish a research fund to invest in AYAC as a critical voice in the youth sector. This should be supplemented by including a requirement in all Federal, State, and Local Government funding agreements to consult with AYAC, or the equivalent state peak, in any issue or policy impacting young people.

There is also currently no Federal Minister, or Shadow Minister for Youth, which removes the opportunity for young people, and their rights, to be represented nationally. We ask the government to include a Minister for Youth after the election on July 2 2016.

Further Information:

- [AYAC website](#)
- [ABC article](#) reporting the current position of AYAC, Jan 2016
- To see the AYAC Federal Budget 2016 media release, please email yacwa@yacwa.org.au

Cuts to Headspace Youth Early Psychosis Program

What we know:

- Headspace currently receives funding from the federal government to run an Early Psychosis program across parts of Australia, which helps treat young people for the early signs of psychosis.
- The Department of Health will cut centres' current \$156m funding to 75 per cent of that total this year, and then lower it to 30 per cent next year.
- **headspace** Joondalup, **headspace** Osborne Park and **headspace** Midland are all provided funding to deliver services as part of this program.

Potential Impact:

- Cuts to the Headspace Early Psychosis program will have a direct impact on the capacity of affected centres to deliver quality care for young people experiencing the early signs of psychosis and their families.
- A reduction in service delivery will have a lasting effect on vulnerable young people's mental health.

Comment:

YACWA is concerned at the effect these cuts will have on young people living in WA with serious mental illness, especially given the lack of information about what support will be provided instead.

We ask the Government to ensure the funds lost through these measures are redirected to other services for young people with complex mental health problems, such as early psychosis. These funds must be used to ensure equitable access, regardless of location.

What Others have said:

- [Dr Patrick McGorry, leading Mental Health expert](#)
- [Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Senator Katy Gallagher - Media Statement](#)

Further Information:

- [About headspace](#)
- [About Psychosis](#)
- This program was based upon a similar model designed by Orygen Youth Health. You can find out more about the initial program by [Clicking Here](#).

Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS (YEAH)

What we know:

- For over a decade, Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS (YEAH) has established itself as Australia's only national youth-led and youth focused sexual health promotion organisation.
- Through its core programs and activities, YEAH advances the 8 key strategies components of the Federal Government's national STI strategy and has led the way in terms of young people's participation and leadership in increasing access to quality, inclusive, age-appropriate and youth-friendly sexual health information.
- YEAH costs \$450,000 per year to run, with only four paid staff, but provided face-to-face sexual health information to over 10,000 young people in 2015 alone.

Impact:

The defunding of YEAH is very concerning at a time when:

- STI rates are increasing and condom use is [decreasing](#)
- With over [75% of all STIs](#) occurring amongst young people aged 15-29, and
- A [quarter](#) of sexually active high school students reporting unwanted or coerced sex

It is possible that we may see an increase in young people not knowing where to find youth sexual health information, thereby increasing their chances of contracting an STI or blood borne virus (BBVs).

Comment:

YACWA is concerned at the Federal Government's lack of commitment to fund this important area of work, with the rising rates of STIs within the youth population being a pressing public health issue for our country. YACWA urges the Government to continue developing strategies and providing resources to ensure that all young people are being educated and empowered to make positive choices regarding their sexual health.

What Others have said:

- [YEAH Media Statement April 19, 2016](#)
- [WA Today Article 'Axing of sex education program YEAH part of the ideological agenda'](#)

Further Information:

- [About YEAH](#)
- [Sign the Petition to #saveYEAH](#)
- [YEAH Media Release April 14, 2016](#)

Cessation of Certificate IV Trial

What we know:

- The Federal government provided funding in 2014 for a trial that tested the impact of the availability of Vocational Education and Training Higher Education Loan Programme (VET-FEE HELP) assistance for certain Certificate IV qualifications on enrolments, completions and pathways to further education
- WA was selected as a trial state, and was offered the opportunity to nominate fields of study
- A Certificate IV in Youth Work is available for people to receive VET-FEE HELP assistance up until December 2016
- There was no additional funding provided post December 2016, effectively ending the trial.

Impact:

- After December 2016 VET-FEE HELP will no longer be available for the Certificate IV in:
 - Youth Work
 - Aged Care
 - Community Services
 - Disabilities
 - Education Support

Comment:

The Certificate IV is a recognised pathway into a career in Youth Work, and the VET-FEE HELP for young people entering this course was essential in ensuring equitable access for all students. With no commitment made to extending the trial, we are concerned that fewer people will enter the field of Youth Work, resulting in fewer qualified youth workers overall, or worse, unqualified practice with young people.

YACWA is committed to ensuring a strong workforce supporting young people in WA, and we would like the government to make a commitment make scholarships and bursaries available for young people for whom the cost of education is a significant barrier.

Further Information:

- Information provided on the [Study Assist website](#)