

# Forging a fair path forward

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YACWA PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION  
2017-18



YACWA acknowledges  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander people as the  
Traditional Custodians of  
this land and its waters.

We wish to pay our  
respects to Elders past and  
present and extend this to  
all Aboriginal people seeing  
this message.

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# Foreword

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YACWA's inaugural Pre-Budget Submission has mixed into its foundation the old saying: give a man a fish and he will be fed for a day, but teach a man to fish and he will feed himself for life. This is the underlying principle, which is essential to interpreting this report.

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As a State, our debt has risen sharply, the mining boom is coming to an end, a low GST share is hurting us, and the growing gap of inequality is ever increasing. A decreasing amount of resources to support the entire population means that there has never been a more crucial time to sharpen our focus on the value of the state's investments.

Therefore, the Youth Affairs Council of WA, on behalf of its members, youth workers, and young people across the State, are calling on government to shift its focus towards supporting young people through early intervention strategies. We believe strongly that if you support marginalised young people in their transition to adulthood, they will forge their own path forward and become more independent and vibrant contributors to our economy in their futures.

For this reason, we have titled our report: Forging a Fair Path Forward, and presented our recommendations around the following priority areas we hope government can stimulate action in:

- **preventing recurrent disadvantage**
- **providing urgently needed services**
- **supporting early intervention**
- **valuing young people's experience**
- **creating a strong youth sector**

The recommendations herein are based upon broad consultation, which was undertaken as part of the development of this submission. YACWA has received consistent member feedback through this process, and over the years, that there are programs and services working to assist young people into adulthood, and providing cost savings to our economy down the track.

As a rights-based organisation, we do not like making this an economic argument when there is also a strong ethical argument; however, we do so here because it will help to achieve results for our members, including marginalised young people.

With that in mind, on behalf of the YACWA Board, YACWA staff, and of course our members, we are pleased to present this report to you with a sense of hope for what the future might hold.



**Ross Wortham**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia



**Andrew Wenzel**  
Chairperson, YACWA Board  
Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

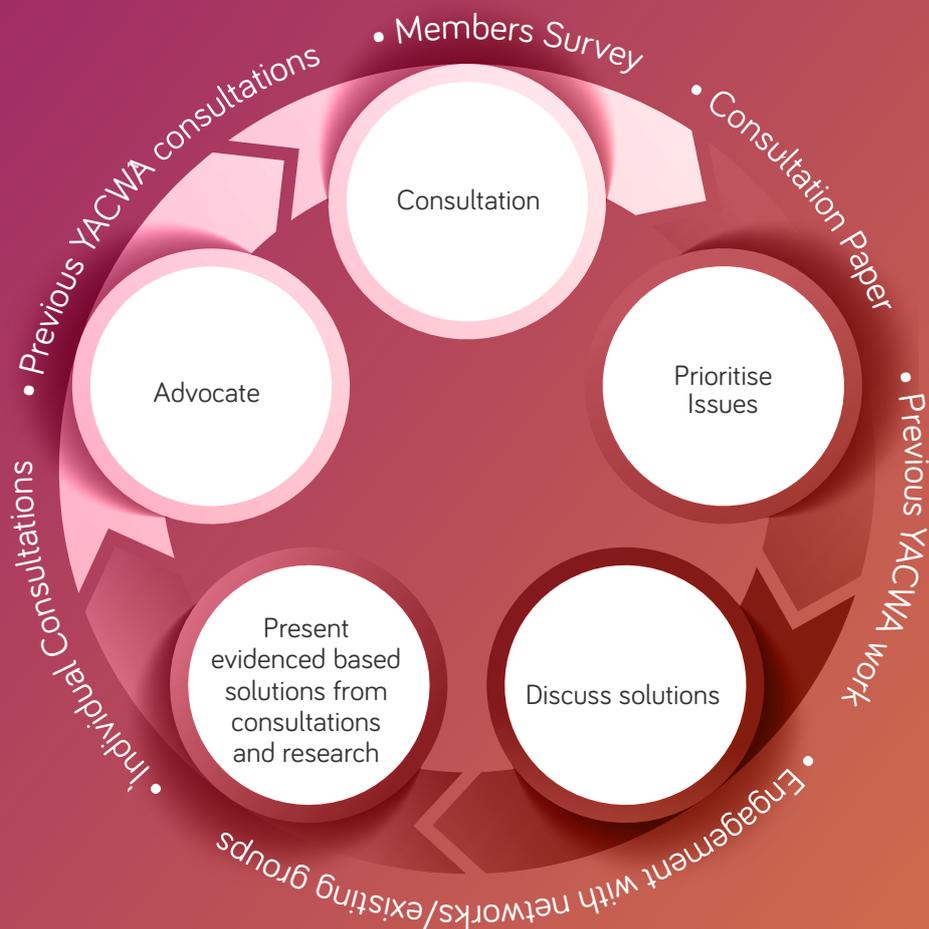
# About The Youth Affairs Council of WA

The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) is the peak non-government body representing young people and the youth sector in Western Australia. With over 500 members Statewide, YACWA's work reflects the views of its members, as well as young people, youth services, and youth workers from across the State.

In doing so, YACWA acts primarily as a human rights organisation that seeks to address the exclusion of young people in a rapidly changing society. Our work is governed by four guiding principles: respect, equity, integrity and the celebration of diversity.

By acting as a united, independent, and active advocate for the youth sector, YACWA aims to influence policy affecting the lives of young people in a beneficial way. Accordingly, YACWA, its members, and member services are representative of young people and the youth sector in Western Australia.

## Submission Methodology



# Consultation Overview

The consultation responses guided the formation of the priority areas, issues, and recommendations. All members were invited to participate, as well, additional groups, networks, and individuals were approached to participate. The numbers below only reflect those that engaged with this process.

Key anecdotal messages we have heard

“Cross-sector communication needs to improve and to lead inter-departmental dialogue, thus improving service delivery.”

“Early intervention ensures young people get the right support at the right time and prevents the costly expense of tertiary intervention.”

“Short term funding leads to constant turnover of staff which impacts the vision and continuity of youth programs and services. Youth programs and services need to have access to long term funding contracts of three years or more.”

Youth workers through network meetings/group discussions

100  
INDIVIDUALS

Young people (individuals, groups networks)

203  
INDIVIDUALS

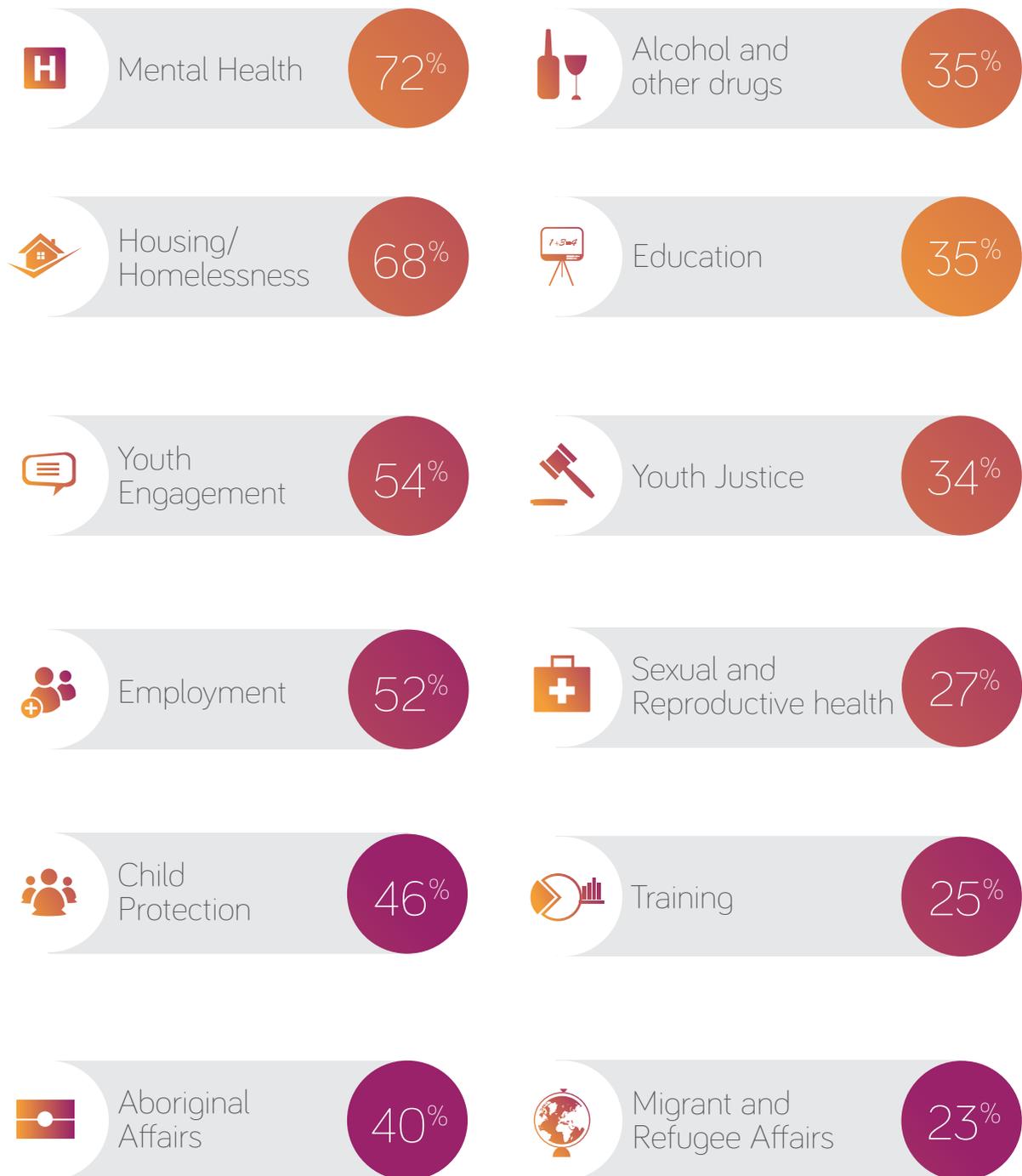
Sector leaders through individual consultations

17  
INDIVIDUALS

Survey responses

111  
INDIVIDUALS

# What areas are important to our members\*

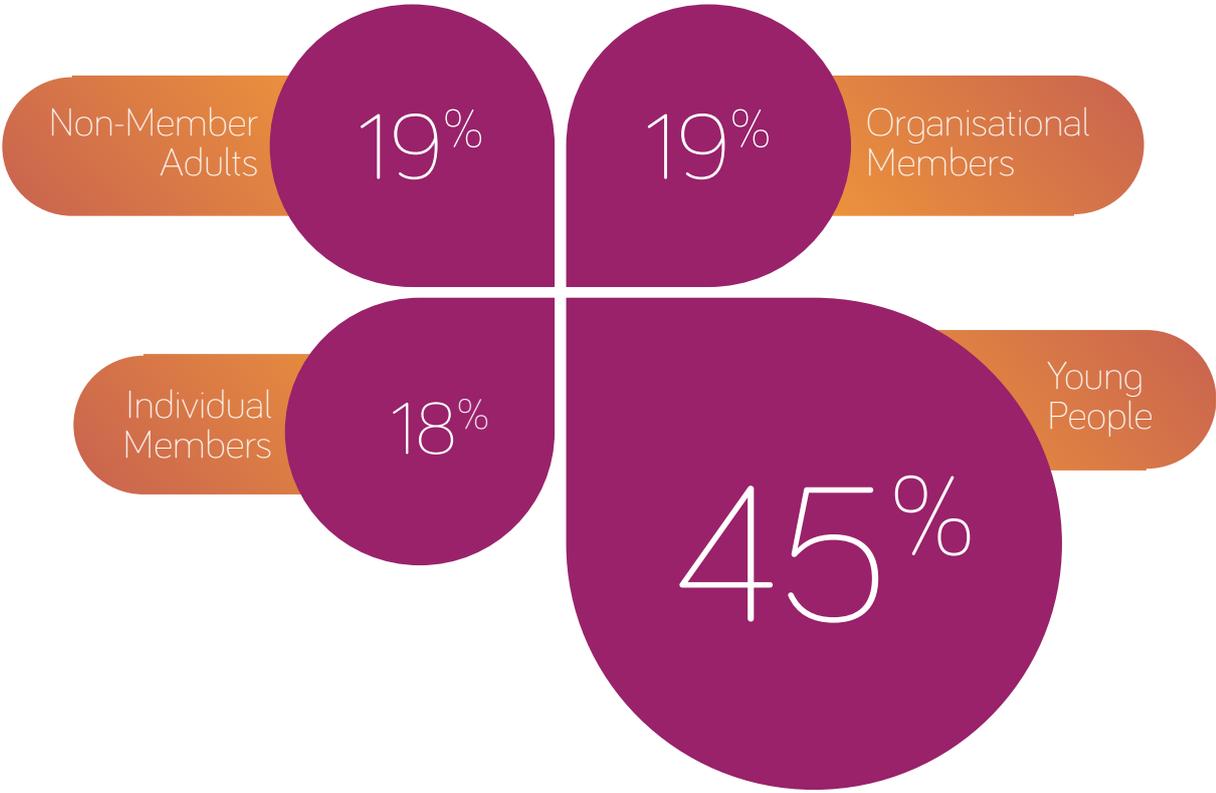


\*Percentages are indicative of responses to a multiple choice question

# Survey Responses

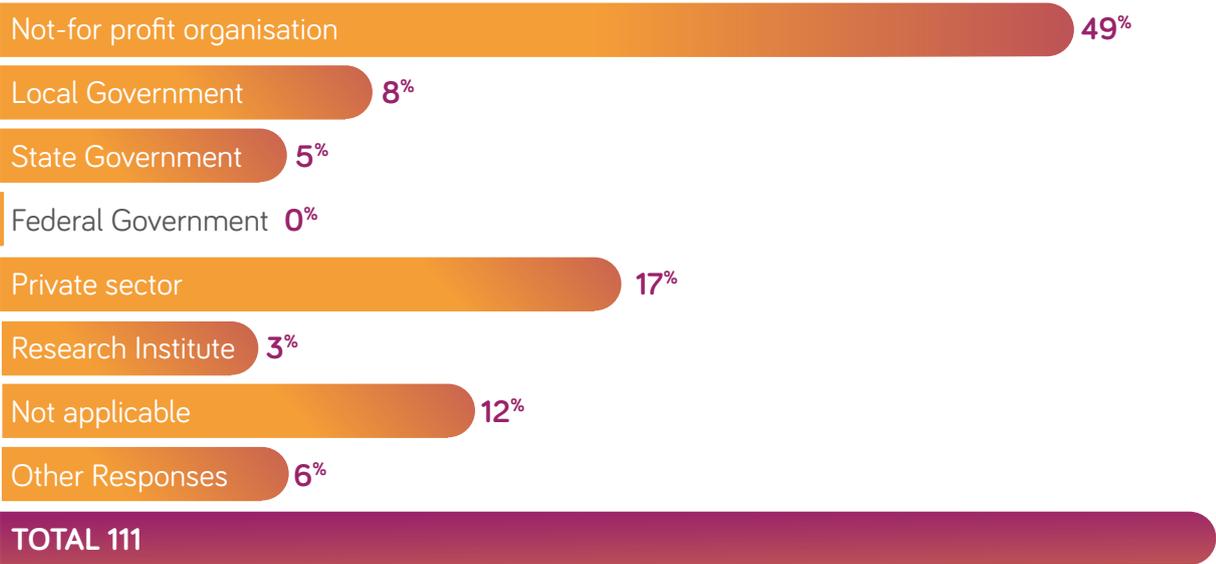
## People

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## Workplaces

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# Survey Responses

## Priority Issues Facing Young People and the Youth Sector

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“Assistance to connect with sustainable and supported employment opportunities.”

“Insufficient funding for mental health support.”

“Limited access to relevant education programs for school disengaged youth.”

“Lack of homeless accommodation/services that don't meet the needs of the youth who NEED the services due to lack of capacity to support youth with drugs and alcohol & mental illness.”

“Education- access, subject choice and career pathway, inclusion of young people with disabilities in the classroom and recognising that there are significant barriers for young people of CALD backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in school.”

# Young People in WA

How many people live in WA?\*

**495,843** people

AGED 10-24 AS OF JUNE 2015

WHO	NUMBER OF YP	REFERENCE
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People</b>	<b>27,657</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011
<b>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Young People</b>	<b>111,680</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics; Migration Australia, 2016
<b>Young Carers</b>	<b>20,600</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics; Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings; 2016
<b>Young people with a disability or specific limitation or restriction</b>	<b>78,900</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics; Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings; 2012
<b>Children in Care</b>	<b>4,658</b>	Department of Child Protection and Family Support, Annual Report, 2016

\*Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, August 2016

Young people in detention 133<sup>^</sup>

Department of Corrective Services,  
Annual Report, 2016

Homelessness young people 4,280

Australian Bureau of Statistics,  
Counting the Homeless, 2006\*

\* 2011 data was inaccurate due to changes  
in methodology.

Young people living in regional WA 142,611

Australian Bureau of Statistics,  
Population by Age and Sex,  
Regions of Australia, August 2016

Students - High School 173,292

*Summary Statistics of Schools  
and Full-Time Students,  
Department of Education, 2015*

Students - TAFE 66,955

*Department of Training and  
Workplace Development Key  
Training Enrolment Statistics, 2016*

<sup>^</sup>On average per day.



# Evidence the status quo is insufficient

## SOME KEY STATS TO HIGHLIGHT

## REFERENCE

Around **75%** of all severe mental illness starts before the age of 24. By age 21, just over half of young people will have experienced a diagnosable psychiatric disorder.

Mental Health Commission of WA, Youth Mental Health, website accessed November 2016

**50%** of Western Australian 15-19 year olds reported lack of confidence in “their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school.”

Mission Australia, Youth Survey Report, 2015.

**11%** young people 15-24 years old are looking for work. That’s 5.2% higher than the statewide unemployment rate.

Labour Force Region (SA4) - Western Australia statistics, Department of Employment, accessed 2016.

**73%** of young people indicated that they felt like politicians don’t understand issues impacting young people.

*YACWA internal survey of 345 young people, 2016.*

On any given day, roughly **75%** of young people in detention are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Department of Corrective Services, Annual Report, 2016.

**55%** of young people leaving detention return within two years.

Department of Corrective Services, Annual Report, 2016.

**53%** of children in care are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Department of Child Protection and Family Support, Annual Report, 2016.

**16%** of children in care had no leaving care plan in place when exiting State Care.

Department of Child Protection and Family Support, Annual Report, 2016.



# Strategic Recommendations

## PRIORITY AREA ONE: PREVENTING RECURRENT DISADVANTAGE

1

### WHAT

Commit to extending the Out of Home Care age to 21 years of age on an individual, as needs basis, by no later than 2020 and ensure consistent support and planning for young people who are leaving Out of Home Care are in place.

### PORTFOLIO

*Out of Home Care*

PAGE: 22

2

### WHAT

Develop an implementation plan to guide the Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy and include a mandated minimum of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations that will be procured as part of Action 2.2 of the strategy.

### PORTFOLIO

*Child Protection*

PAGE: 24

3

### WHAT

Through the Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Reform, commit to a mandate that 30% of all government procurement to the not-for-profit sector for Aboriginal youth services goes to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

### PORTFOLIO

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*

PAGE: 26

4

### WHAT

Redirect funding from the Education, Health, Mental Health, Training and Workforce Development Departments to meet required care within Banksia Hill Detention Centre

### PORTFOLIO

*Corrective Services*

PAGE: 28

## PRIORITY AREA TWO: PROVIDING URGENTLY NEEDED SERVICES

5

### WHAT

Develop a collaborative inter-agency approach to youth mental health, including a shared screening tool and a joint case management approach for young people with multiple risk factors for suicide.

### PORTFOLIO

*Mental Health*

PAGE: 32

6

### WHAT

Explore the legal implications and legislation requirements of allowing the expansion of homelessness service delivery to young people under the age of 16.

### PORTFOLIO

*Housing/ Homelessness*

PAGE: 34

7

**WHAT**

Replicate the Government Building Training Policy so that there are minimum requirements of entry-level employees engaged in training across government departments.

**PORTFOLIO**

*Employment*

PAGE: 36

8

**WHAT**

Reinstate a cap on TAFE course fees, following a consultation with key stakeholders, and reduce the 20% deposit required on repayment plans to 10% by adding the difference to the repayment plan.

**PORTFOLIO**

*Training*

PAGE: 38

**PRIORITY AREA THREE: SUPPORTING EARLY INTERVENTION**

10

**WHAT**

Order an independent review into the school curriculum to provide recommendations on expanding content, providing early intervention strategies and programs, engaging students with feedback processes, and supporting schools through policy measures to work collaboratively with their communities and the Not For Profit sector.

**PORTFOLIO**

*Education*

PAGE: 44

12

**WHAT**

Through the Premier of Western Australia, adopt and maintain a whole-of-government strategy to invest in early intervention and crime prevention programs. Not one agency can do it alone.

**PORTFOLIO**

*Corrective Services*

PAGE: 48

**PRIORITY AREA FOUR: VALUING YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE**

13

**WHAT**

Adopt and maintain a whole of government approach to incorporating Child Impact Statements on all policies and government decisions, and ensure that an independent and specialised peak body remains to advocate for useful services and engage with young people.

**PORTFOLIO**

*Youth Engagement*

PAGE: 52

14

**WHAT**

Review internal department policies and put in place strategies to ensure that all complaints mechanisms and advocacy services are explained and understood by all children and young people in care.

**PORTFOLIO**

*Child Protection*

PAGE: 54

15

**WHAT**

Develop a LGBTIQ Health and Wellbeing Action Plan that articulates the Government's priorities for improving health and wellbeing outcomes among LGBTIQ individuals and communities.

**PORTFOLIO***LGBTIQ*

PAGE: 56

16

**WHAT**

Research the current state of transition and employment outcomes experienced by young Australians with disability and investigate other policy responses to improving school to employment transition for young people with disabilities.

**PORTFOLIO***Disability*

PAGE: 58

17

**WHAT**

Create cultural and diversity training strategy to be applied across relevant Government departments and portfolios that work with young CaLD people.

**PORTFOLIO***Multi-culturalism*

PAGE: 60

**PRIORITY AREA FIVE: CREATING A STRONG YOUTH SECTOR**

18

**WHAT**

Develop a youth homelessness services plan that maps current services and develops future need for service delivery regardless of funding availability. Develop a Youth Homelessness Strategy alongside the services plan, with a strong focus on early intervention programs.

**PORTFOLIO***Child Protection*

PAGE: 64

20

**WHAT**

Provide additional support to Regional Managers Forums in whatever capacity they require to help them identify and step into the critical role they play in the roll-out of the Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Reforms.

**PORTFOLIO***Procurement*

PAGE: 68



# Expenditure Recommendations

## PRIORITY AREA ONE: PREVENTING RECURRENT DISADVANTAGE

1	<b>WHAT</b> Co-design and trial an intensive transitional support service, which includes wrap around services for young people leaving state care.	<b>PORTFOLIO</b> <i>Out of Home Care</i> PAGE: 22	<b>COST</b> \$2M
2	<b>WHAT</b> Fund the Earlier Intervention and Family Support strategy to reduce the removal rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.	<b>PORTFOLIO</b> <i>Child Protection</i> PAGE: 24	<b>COST</b> \$18M
3	<b>WHAT</b> Allocate funding to the Funding and Contracting Services unit to open a new division tasked specifically with supporting Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) with applying for grants and tenders, and with managing contractual obligations.	<b>PORTFOLIO</b> <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</i> PAGE: 26	<b>COST</b> \$7M
4	<b>WHAT</b> Provide an evidence based through-care program delivered by a not-for profit, co-designed by young people and in consultation with the not-for-profit sector.	<b>PORTFOLIO</b> <i>Corrective Services</i> PAGE: 28	<b>COST</b> \$3M

## PRIORITY AREA TWO: PROVIDING URGENTLY NEEDED SERVICES

5	<b>WHAT</b> Fund acute mental health beds in all of the regions by 2018. Bring forward the 2020 targets in the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan for Community Treatment Services for North and South Metro to 2018, in order to release pressure on the acute system.	<b>PORTFOLIO</b> <i>Mental Health</i> PAGE: 32	<b>COST</b> \$4.5M
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<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Commit to funding the state's contribution to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and ensure that the state's input is protected for homelessness services. Provide additional funding for youth crisis accommodation and short-term transitional accommodation services, following consultation with key stakeholders and young people.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Housing/ Homelessness</i></p> <p><small>PAGE: 34</small></p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$17M</i></p>
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<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Fund the development of a web portal for employers to specifically approach young people and first time job seekers, and provide funding to incentivise employers hiring through the website.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Employment</i></p> <p><small>PAGE: 36</small></p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$2M</i></p>
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<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Create a further concession for TAFE users which extends the current concession rate to 75% of course fees. Consider applying this extension to those who qualify for Rent Assistance through the Unreasonable To Live at Home policy.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Training</i></p> <p><small>PAGE: 38</small></p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$4M</i></p>
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**PRIORITY AREA THREE: SUPPORTING EARLY INTERVENTION**

<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Fund the Youth Connections Program, or a similar model, at a state-based level.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Employment/ Education/Training</i></p> <p><small>PAGE: 42</small></p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$7.5M</i></p>
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<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Provide funding over the forward estimates to meet the demand required for prevention services in the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan. Currently there are no plans to meet this target.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Mental Health</i></p> <p><small>PAGE: 46</small></p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$24M</i></p>
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<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Invest in early intervention community based programs, such as intensive mentoring and diversionary programs, that reduce crime by addressing the underlying conditions that lead to offending behaviour.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Corrective Services</i></p> <p><small>PAGE: 48</small></p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$5M</i></p>
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## PRIORITY AREA FOUR: VALUING YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE

13	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Engage a group of young people to co-design an interactive online tool that provides a platform for young people and policy makers across all levels of government to exchange ideas, policies and experiences.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Youth engagement</i></p> <p>PAGE: 52</p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$0.5M</i></p>
14	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Fund the development of a WA Child Protection Advocacy Service, similar in operation to the Mental Health Advocacy Service, with genuine consultation and co-design by young people and the not-for-profit sector.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Out of Home Care</i></p> <p>PAGE: 54</p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$2M</i></p>
15	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Fund a centre of excellence to engage with young people who are LGBTIQ and include them in providing training to health providers, assessments of inclusive services, best practice models, advocacy and support to young people who are LGBTIQ.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>LGBTIQ</i></p> <p>PAGE: 56</p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$2M</i></p>
16	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Invest in projects and initiatives to improve participation rates of young people with disabilities transitioning from school into employment, or vocational education and training (VET) in WA.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Disability</i></p> <p>PAGE: 58</p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$3M</i></p>
17	<p><b>WHAT</b></p> <p>Provide funding for the development and delivery of cultural competency and diversity training, in consultation with the CaLD community and young people.</p>	<p><b>PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><i>Multi-culturalism</i></p> <p>PAGE: 60</p>	<p><b>COST</b></p> <p><i>\$1M</i></p>

## PRIORITY AREA FIVE: CREATING A STRONG YOUTH SECTOR

19

### WHAT

Sustain existing service delivery levels of community services across the community services sector by ensuring the cost of the ERO wage obligations is met in state contracting, in line with WACOSS' recommendations.

### PORTFOLIO

*Procurement*

PAGE: 66

### COST

*\$25M*

20

### WHAT

Provide staff support to each Regional Managers Forum (RMF) to ensure the priorities and actions identified as important by each RMF can be developed in between meetings. Provide funding to a central Government team to provide outreach support to Government agencies as the Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Reforms roll out.

### PORTFOLIO

*Procurement*

PAGE: 68

### COST

*\$6M*



# Priority Area One



PREVENTING  
RECURRENT  
DISADVANTAGE

# 1

## Supporting young people transitioning from care

### PRIORITY ISSUE

A recent report involving young homeless people found that 63% had been involved with the Out of Home Care (OHC) system <sup>(1)</sup>, indicating the long-term prospects of young people leaving care are not being addressed.

“People celebrate their 18<sup>th</sup> because they’re legal and able to drink, but for me it was ... now I have to leave.” - **YOUNG PERSON** <sup>(2)</sup>

### WHAT WE’VE HEARD

Through YACWA’s consultations, we heard that leaving care plans are inconsistently applied, with planning starting too late and young people in some cases not being made aware of what is involved in them.

The Department of Child Protection and Family Support’s annual report indicates that 16% of young people in care had no leaving care plan in place prior to exiting State care. Of the 84% that did, no monitoring or success measures were reported on the long-term outcomes for these young people. <sup>(3)</sup>

Many young people exiting State care are at a much higher risk of facing unemployment, becoming homeless, living with mental illness, struggling with education, and have little or no support to face these challenges.

There are a range of factors relating to the transition of young people from State care, which need to be acknowledged and addressed prior to the young person transitioning to independence. <sup>(4)</sup> This means that planning led by the young person, and additional support, in the lead up to transition from care is crucial. A recent Deloitte Access Economics study also found that in Western Australia, extending care from 18 to 21 years of age would result in an expected return of \$2.17 in either savings or increased income from every dollar invested in such a reform.

A sense of security, stability, continuity and social support are strong predictors of positive outcomes for young people after leaving care <sup>(5)</sup>, and need to be applied to WA.

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Co-design and trial an intensive transitional support service, which includes wrap around services, for young people leaving State care who have complex needs and are at risk of homelessness.

## STRATEGY

- Commit to changing the Children and Community Services Act 2004 to extend the Out of Home Care age to 21 years of age, on an individual, as needs basis, by no later than 2020.
- Develop and apply dedicated reform strategies to ensure consistent support and planning for young people who are leaving, or have left, care.

COSTING \$2M

# Support

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- Budget Priority 4: Trial an intensive transitional support model for young people leaving state care
  - *Pre-Budget Submission: The Future In Our Hands, WACOSS* <sup>(6)</sup>
- South Australia is currently debating this reform following a Royal Commission's findings. <sup>(7)</sup>
- Recommendation 158: Amend the Children's Protection Act 1993 to require the Minister to provide or arrange assistance to care leavers aged between 18 and 25 years.
  - *Child Protection Systems Royal Commission report, South Australia* <sup>(8)</sup>
- "Together, these results and accompanying research put forward a sound socioeconomic case for consideration of public investment in the future of young people in OOHC, beyond the age of 18."
  - *Raising our children: Guiding young Victorians in care into adulthood, Deloitte Access Economics* <sup>(9)</sup>

# 2

## Reducing the number of Aboriginal children and young people in care

### PRIORITY ISSUE

As of June 2016, 53% of children in Out of Home Care were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander <sup>(10)</sup>, which is a wildly disproportionate number given Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children only make up a fraction of the population in WA.

“Before they go to the homes, to all the residential places, work with the kids and their families first to try and build them up before they look to other alternatives. It doesn't happen. They just take us away.” - **YOUNG ABORIGINAL PERSON** <sup>(11)</sup>

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

The number of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in care has been consistently growing over the past five years, almost doubling in number since 2010. <sup>(10)</sup>

In September of 2016, the Government launched the Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy to address these issues. <sup>(12)</sup> While the strategy has four important focus areas, there is no current funding plan or implementation plan attached to the strategy.

During the last financial year, the Government spent a combined total of \$319.6m on placing children in care. <sup>(13)</sup> In this regard, an investment in early intervention makes both social and economic sense.

**The Earlier Intervention and Family Support strategy will match its own value if it can prevent 418 young people requiring out of home care support.**

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Fund the Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy to reduce the removal rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

## STRATEGY

- Develop an implementation plan for the Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy, in partnership with service providers and key stakeholders, to ensure that the strategy translates into action.
- Include a benchmark of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations that will be procured to deliver services and support as part of action 2.2 of the strategy.

COSTING **\$18M**

# Support

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- Budget Priority 2: Fund the Earlier Intervention and Family Support strategy to reduce Aboriginal child removal rates
  - *Pre-Budget Submission: The Future In Our Hands, WACOSS*<sup>(14)</sup>
- Reform and Policy target 3.2 - Commit to reducing the disproportionate rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait children in the child protection system and to uphold the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles'
  - *Key Reform and Policy Targets, Social Reinvestment WA*<sup>(15)</sup>
- Recommendation Area 2: Keep Aboriginal children safe within their family.
  - *Always Was, Always Will Be Koori Children, Victorian Government*<sup>(16)</sup>

# 3

## Supporting Aboriginal community controlled organisations

### PRIORITY ISSUE

The Closing the Gap Report Card shows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still faring far worse than non-Aboriginal Australians in many key areas, with enormous implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people <sup>(17)</sup>:

- Child mortality rates: 207.9 deaths per 100,000
- Suicide: 39.3 deaths per 100,000
- Attainment of a Year 12 certificate: 45.2%
- Employment rate: 45.6%

“There’s two philosophical issues that need to inform whatever we do and that is that Indigenous people are culturally different. They do need a different type of approach. The second issue is that with any group, it needs to be owned by the community and by the people themselves. I think unless they’re a part of identifying what the issue is, coming up with the solution and they’re empowered to deal with things, resources will be wasted and there’ll be limited gains.” - **PAT DUDGEON** <sup>(18)</sup>

### WHAT WE’VE HEARD

While these issues are often vast, complex and require intensive support that cannot be fixed with a blanket approach, we have consistently heard that solutions to these problems need to be stimulated from within the communities themselves. We need to work more closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we need to listen more and we need to empower communities themselves to the best of our ability to create change.

The *Listen to Us* report launched by the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People delivered the findings from a consultation with 1,200 young Aboriginal people. <sup>(19)</sup> Much of what

they had to say was congruent with what we hear from Aboriginal parents, families and Elders and what a growing body of evidence shows is important for the wellbeing of children and young people. That is:

- The importance of strong families and communities which provide a sense of belonging and wellbeing
- The importance of culture and its contribution to a strong sense of self and wellbeing
- The value placed by young people on education and their aspirations for the future, and the importance of support from family and friends to help achieve at school

- The importance of access to a broad range of recreational activities which support positive emotional and social skill development, community engagement and physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Racial harmony and a broad community respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture <sup>(19)</sup>

We all know the status quo is not good enough. Government and the not-for-profit sector need to work more closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure that they are leading problem-solving discussions and are leading the change they want to see in their own lives. Until that happens, money and time will be wasted on ineffective programs.

## Recommendation

### EXPENDITURE

Allocate funding to the Department of Finance, Funding and Contracting Services unit to open a new division tasked specifically with supporting Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) with applying for grants and tenders, and with managing contractual obligations.

### STRATEGY

Through the Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Reform commit to a mandate that 30% of all government procurement to the not-for-profit sector for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth services goes to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

COSTING \$7M

## Support

- Budget Priority 3: Build the capacity of Aboriginal community controlled services to deliver therapeutic healing, intensive family support and child protection services
  - *WACOSS, Pre-Budget Submission: The Future In Our Hands* <sup>(20)</sup>
- "Those [programs] that have been successful have generally been underpinned by good corporate governance, had a commitment to prioritising cultural values...Indigenous control of the planning, design and implementation of programs is a critical factor to success."
  - *What works in effective Indigenous community-managed programs and organisations* <sup>(21)</sup>
- Recommendation 2: The Government of Western Australia, through the Premier, commits to a whole-of-government priority for agencies to develop guidelines specifically tailored for direct consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
  - *Listen To This, WA Parliament Inquiry* <sup>(22)</sup>

# 4

## Preventing recidivism through rehabilitation

### PRIORITY ISSUE

Banksia Hill Detention Centre is WA's sole youth detention facility. Historically, the centre has had limited therapeutic, trauma-informed and restorative approaches to rehabilitation. The glaring results of this are that 54% of young people leaving detention return within two years.<sup>(23)</sup>

“I seem to have spent a lot of my life in a very destructive way. I even nearly f••••d this course up. The guys on the course stayed with me though and that made me realise that I can build things not just at work but with my life as well.” - **YOUNG PERSON** <sup>(12)</sup>

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

On an average day during 2015-2016, the Department of Corrective Services managed 133 young people in detention and 1,031 young people in the community.<sup>(25)</sup>

Young people leaving Banksia Hill Detention Centre may reoffend for many reasons, but with better planning, and support within Banksia and when leaving Banksia that rate is assured to be reduced. Lack of therapeutic, restorative, and educational services whilst in detention result in ongoing costs for the state by young people reoffending, and poor outcomes for the young people involved.

The adult number of prisoners is growing, and the spending for adult services reached \$804m in comparison to the \$103m for youth services during 2015/16.<sup>(26)</sup> With the high recidivism rates of young people, it is clear to see that the adult population will continue to grow unless something new is done.

The through-care model run by the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) in the Northern Territory, through client exit surveys, found that in the second half of 2011, only three through-care clients (out of more than 75 clients) breached court orders or reoffended.<sup>(27)</sup> That is a positive result and is worth trying to replicate here.

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Provide an evidence-based through-care program delivered by a not-for-profit, co-designed by young people and in consultation with the not-for-profit sector.

## STRATEGY

Redirect funding from the Education, Health, Mental Health, Training and Workforce Development Departments to meet required care within Banksia Hill Detention Centre.

COSTING **\$3M**

# Support

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- Recommendation 7: Increased funding for alcohol and other drug services in prisons to match the growth in service need, and institution of an ongoing population and needs based funding formula.
  - *Justice & Community Safety in Western Australia, WACOSS, WAAMH, WANADA* <sup>(28)</sup>
- Reform and Policy target 5.8 - Ensure adequate post release services for people who are returning to their families and communities.
  - *Key Reform and Policy Targets, Social Reinvestment WA* <sup>(29)</sup>
- Recommendation 24: Increased funding for community organisations to provide personal, through-care support to (more) young people leaving detention.
  - *Youth Justice Think Tank, YACWA, WACOSS, Youth Legal Service* <sup>(30)</sup>



# Priority Area Two



PROVIDING URGENTLY  
NEEDED SERVICES

# 5

## Preventing self-harm and suicide

### PRIORITY ISSUE

Mental Health is often identified as a big issue for young people.<sup>(31)</sup> However, in most cases, particularly in the regions, access to help is difficult and results in young people not getting the treatment they need.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People found that wait times to see a counsellor in some regional areas of WA is reported to be between four and eight weeks in some cases.<sup>(32)</sup> In addition, there is a significant gap in health services that provide specialist acute mental health beds in regional areas.

“More support is needed for young people who are really suicidal – especially in the regions” - **YOUNG PERSON, CONSULTATION**

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

The Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan outlines the optimal mix and level of mental health, alcohol and other drug services required to meet the needs of Western Australians over the next 10 years.<sup>(33)</sup> The plan, as well as other reports, indicates services are currently inadequate and the situation is ‘dire’. Currently, there are no acute mental health beds in any of the regions to support young people. Urgent investment is needed for young people to prevent ongoing help required at a higher cost down the track.

YACWA's consultations also indicated that more needs to be done to coordinate the services that are operational, as they often work in silos.

The average cost per purchased bed day in acute specialised mental health units was \$1,384 in 2015/16,<sup>(34)</sup> while the average cost per purchased treatment day of ambulatory care provided by public clinical mental health services was \$482.

Whilst the acute services are more expensive, it is unacceptable to have none in place throughout regional WA. It is clearly more affordable for Government to be providing more community treatment services as a way of preventing patients requiring acute care.

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

- Fund acute mental health beds in each of the regions outlined in the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan by 2018. Currently there are none. <sup>(35)</sup>
- Bring forward the 2020 Youth and Infant, Child and Adolescent Community Treatment Services for North and South Metro to 2018 in order to release pressure on the sector and prevent further stress on the acute system in the metropolitan region.

## STRATEGY

Ensure the Mental Health Commission, working together with the Department of Health, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and the Department of Education, develop a collaborative inter-agency approach, including a shared screening tool and a joint case management approach for young people with multiple risk factors for suicide.

COSTING \$4.5M

# Support

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- Recommendation 8.10.12: All children and young people admitted to the mental health system have a treatment, support and discharge plan and that policies, processes and procedures that ensure care and discharge planning occurs to the level that ensures continuity of services and includes planning for education, accommodation and other support services as needed.
  - *Stokes Review, Bryant Stokes AM* <sup>(36)</sup>
- Recommendation 22 of: The Mental Health Commission, working together with the Department of Health, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and the Department of Education, considers the development of a collaborative inter-agency approach, including consideration of a shared screening tool and a joint case management approach for young people with multiple risk factors for suicide. <sup>(37)</sup>
  - *Ombudsman Western Australia*

# 6

## Protecting crucial homelessness services

### PRIORITY ISSUE

Currently, there is no commitment to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) due to expire in June next year, meaning that existing services are uncertain of their future.

‘Foyer Oxford would not exist without NPAH, and the 241 young people who have come through our doors would not have secured their long term future.’ - **CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

### WHAT WE’VE HEARD

In 2017, large portions of WA’s youth homelessness initiatives are at risk of closure or serious reduction in service delivery, due to the uncertainty surrounding the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), which comes to an end next year.

This is not the first time a decision has been left to the last minute regarding this funding,<sup>(38)</sup> as it happened in 2013 and 2014, and caused a lot of damage as competent staff left their positions. Continuity of services for young people is crucial to their development, and these decisions are having an impact on them.

NPAH funds some crucial programs for young people in WA, including: Foyer Oxford, Young Women Leaving Child Protection, At Risk Youth Accommodation and Support for Children in Homeless Families, which provide services to overcome the trauma and disruption resulting from their homeless experience.<sup>(39)</sup>

For clients interviewed, the support they received and the fact that they were able to be accommodated was life changing and in a few cases life saving. Some have been able to reunite with their children or re-establish lost connections with family and friends.

Given that Youth Futures, a not-for-profit organisation in Perth’s northern suburbs turned away 872 young people over the past financial year according to their annual report from their crisis accommodation and transitional accommodation services, this area has become an urgent need for further investment as well.

YACWA is calling on the State Government to protect the State’s commitment to NPAH, advocate for it being funded federally, and to provide additional resources following consultation across the sector for further urgently needed services. A series of strategic recommendations to support these initiatives are provided in 12 – *organizing the youth homelessness sector*.

# Recommendation

## EXPENDITURE

1. Commit to funding the State NPAH agreement, advocate for additional Federal Government funding, and at least ensure that the current State's contribution is sanctioned for quality homelessness services.
2. Provide additional funding for youth crisis accommodation and short term transitional accommodation services, following consultation with key stakeholders and young people.

## STRATEGY

Explore the legal implications and legislation requirements of allowing the expansion of homelessness service delivery to young people under the age of 16.

COSTING 1. \$13M <sup>(39)</sup> 2. \$4M

# Support

- A survey conducted by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support found that the majority of specialist homelessness services thought that the following were most concerning:
  - *a shortage of suitable housing;*
  - *housing affordability;*
  - *complexity of client needs including drug and alcohol dependence and mental health issues;*
  - *and limited opportunities to move people through the homelessness service system.*<sup>(40)</sup>
- Recommendation: Funding for all 14 NPAH programs should be continued.
  - *National Partnership Agreement On Homelessness Evaluation Of Western Australian Programs* <sup>(41)</sup>
- Recommendation 3.3 Ensure adequate accommodation for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and adults.
  - *Key Reform and Policy Targets, Social Ventures WA* <sup>(42)</sup>



## Reducing youth unemployment

### PRIORITY ISSUE

Youth unemployment in WA is trending upwards, with it now at almost double the standard unemployment rate at 11.1%, as of June 2016.

“No one is willing to take a chance on people that have no experience”. - SURVEY RESPONDENT, YACWA <sup>(43)</sup>

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

YACWA heard through our consultations that young people leaving school, university or TAFE looking for work are struggling to find employment, as employers look to employ people with experience. Many also feel underprepared and anxious about the employment process. This means that young people have an unfair disadvantage in the job market, or many have to go above and beyond in order to get the experience they need to find a job.

A recent YACWA survey indicated that over 50% felt lack of experience was a challenge. <sup>(43)</sup> This issue was also highlighted in the Youth Partnership Project's *Speak Out For Change* report, following a youth forum with 100 young people in 2015. <sup>(44)</sup>

Young people who find work early not only have long-term job prospects, but also contribute to the economy through taxes. Incentivising employers to hire young people reduces the risk of dependency on other government services.

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Fund the development of a web portal for employers to specifically approach young people and first time job seekers, and provide funding to incentivise employers hiring through the website.

## STRATEGY

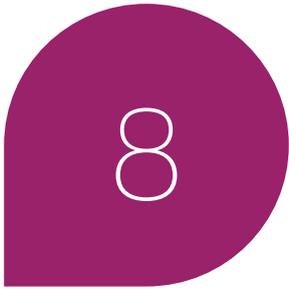
Replicate the Government Building Training Policy <sup>(45)</sup> so that there are minimum requirements of entry-level employees engaged in training across relevant government departments.

COSTING \$2M

# Support

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- YACWA, WA Employment Survey Results. <sup>(43)</sup>
- Youth Partnership Project, Speak Out for Change Youth Summit Report. <sup>(44)</sup>
- Individual consultations.



## Making TAFE accessible

### PRIORITY ISSUE

An increase in TAFE fees since the removal of the cap on annual course fees in 2013 (46) has made courses inaccessible for some young people. Prices have gone up to more than \$3,000 a semester for some certificate level programs and even more for other courses. (47)

“Getting by financially [is difficult] as my TAFE fees are quite high, which leaves me little money to do other things & afford necessities.” - **YOUNG PERSON** (48)

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

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For somebody living on welfare, this increased cost has a significant impact on their day to day living, especially when they are not living with their parents. With no caps currently being applied to course fees, they may increase as less people enrol, making the courses even more inaccessible for young people.

YACWA's consultation indicated that many young people with higher costs of living either do not pay their fees, or simply do not enrol. People also stated that the payment system also makes it difficult, with a deposit being required up front that is costly.

For a young person on Newstart or Youth Allowance, earning up to \$18,812 a year (Youth Allowance<sup>(49)</sup> + Rent Assistance<sup>(50)</sup>) the fees for TAFE can take up to a third of their annual income. This makes affording the average cost of living almost impossible, increasing adverse risk, such as homelessness and unemployment.

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Create a further concession for TAFE users which extends the current concession rate to 75% of course fees. Consider applying this extension to those who qualify for Rent Assistance through the Unreasonable To Live at Home policy.<sup>(51)</sup>

## STRATEGY

- Consult with young people, the youth sector, and TAFEs in order to reinstate a cap on course fees to ensure that education remains affordable into the future.
- Reduce the 20% deposit required on payment plans to 10% by adding the difference to the repayment plan

COSTING \$4M

# Support

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- Recommendation 3: The Department of Training and Workforce Development monitors the effectiveness of the current concession scheme for low SES students and adjust this where appropriate.
  - *Independent Review of the Vocational Education and Training Sector in Western Australia*<sup>(52)</sup>
- Consistent feedback through our consultation identified the need for change, in particular through:
  - *The Agency Network for Youth Consultation*
  - *Several individual consultations*



# Priority Area Three



SUPPORTING EARLY  
INTERVENTION



# Supporting disengaged young people to connect to training and employment

## PRIORITY ISSUE

According to the Department of Education annual report, 26.3% of students enrolled in WA schools that started Year 8 in 2011 didn't successfully graduate Year 12 in 2015.

“The education system needs to cater for all youth, with pathways to work and opportunities to get work experience.” - **YOUNG PERSON** <sup>(44)</sup>

## WHAT WE'VE HEARD

“In the current environment of an aging population and an increasing focus on productivity and skills development; the need for all young Australians to successfully transition to the workforce and make the most of their abilities is critical.

Young people who do not transition successfully from school to further education or employment are the most vulnerable demographic in society. High youth unemployment rates and over representation in under-employment means young people aged 15-24, who are disengaged from education and are not in training or employment, face a bleak future of financial distress, increased likelihood of health and mental health issues, long term welfare dependence and increased likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system.” <sup>(53)</sup>

The Youth Connections Program was a federally funded program that worked with young people who were at risk of disengaging from school. This particular program was independently reviewed and showed evidenced-based success at connecting young people to ongoing training and employment.

The program was de-funded federally as part of the 2014 federal budget. The termination of which precipitated the loss of 77 youth work staff from the not-for-profit sector, left approximately 1500 young people unsupported, and reduced approximately \$7.5 million of funding from Western Australia alone. <sup>(54)</sup>

When you look at the annual costs of a young person on the Youth Allowance, which is between \$6,162 and \$11,263 per young person per year, multiplied by the 1500 young people who would have been supported the total annual cost is between \$9.243 million and \$16.894 million. So it makes logical economic sense to provide early intervention support for young people, such as this program, to find gainful employment. Whilst these figures are costs to the Federal government, the underlying benefits to the State are tangible in the reduction of young people needing state support through statutory services. <sup>(53)</sup>

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Fund the Youth Connections Program, or a similar model, at a State-based level.

COSTING **\$7.5M**

## Support

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- 3.5 Establish and maintain effective education programs to retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in school.
  - *Key Reform and Policy Targets, Social Reinvestment WA* <sup>(42)</sup>
- Young people at risk need a service that sits in between traditional schooling and employment assistance services.
  - *The Space In-between, Youth Connections National Network* <sup>(53)</sup>
- “The closure will leave a considerable gap and RDA [Regional Development Australia] Wheatbelt would recommend a similar program be created.”
  - *Youth Connections Program Legacy Document, RDA Wheatbelt* <sup>(55)</sup>

# 10

## Utilising the school curriculum

### PRIORITY ISSUE

There is a strong desire among young people and social service providers for the school curriculum to incorporate more education around issues relating to health, mental health, employment, diversity, culture, multi-culturalism, resilience, housing homelessness, disabilities, life skills, and contemporary social issues.

- 35% of young people in the Youth Matters Youth Survey indicated that they did not feel like their school helped them with skills to apply for jobs. <sup>(48)</sup>
- Young people frequently said that they believe racism can be addressed through education and opportunities for people to learn about different cultures. <sup>(56)</sup>
- It was generally agreed that primary and secondary school education provide opportunities to empower young people with knowledge about accessing health services, and more could be done to promote education in this area. A further suggestion was placing more emphasis on life skills, emotional self-regulation and coping with adversity in school programs. <sup>(57)</sup>

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Throughout our consultations, a number of groups came back to us stating that they want the school environment, which captures a large percentage of young people, to be more active in teaching 'life skills'.

As Roger Hart puts it in his essay, Children's Participation, from tokenism to citizenship:

"Schools are more likely to be concerned with political indoctrination, rather than with the kind of critical debate which allows children to establish their own beliefs. Democratic theory requires that citizens be allowed to consider changing their form of government, but there is little or no recognition of this principle in school curricula." <sup>(58)</sup>

# Recommendation

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## STRATEGY

Order an independent review into the school curriculum to provide recommendations on expanding content, providing early intervention strategies and programs, and engaging students with feedback processes. Also consider supporting schools through policy measures to work collaboratively with their communities and the not-for-profit sector.

COSTING **\$0.5M**

# Support

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- Provide greater assistance to schools to build and maintain partnerships in their local area that can help address student attendance issues.
  - *Follow-On, Auditor General* <sup>(59)</sup>
- Invest in local system reform of schools and services capacity to support disadvantaged and vulnerable young people and families.
  - *The Cost of Youth Homelessness, Paul Flatau et al* <sup>(60)</sup>
- Recommendation: Approach learners genuinely as individuals, rather than utilising a one-size-fits-all mode.
  - *Speak Out for Change, Partnership Project* <sup>(44)</sup>
- Recommendation 21, Page 93: That the Department of Education regularly review the Independent Public Schools initiative to ensure continual improvement and evaluate progress towards improving student outcomes.
  - *The Report of the Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools initiative, WA Parliament* <sup>(61)</sup>

## 11

## Adequately resourcing early intervention mental health services

### PRIORITY ISSUE

Only 1% of the 2015 budget was allocated to mental health prevention services, with the Government requiring it to reach 5% by 2025, according to the WA Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Service Plan 2015-2025. <sup>(35)</sup>

“I think some places see young people with mental health issues as being a ‘phase’ and therefore do not treat it as a serious matter.” - **YOUNG PERSON** <sup>(62)</sup>

### WHAT WE’VE HEARD

The Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan, identifies the forecasted need for services. It also makes an allocation of funding in prevention services. However, unlike placing the allocation in hours, days or beds, it does so as a percentage of the overall Mental Health budget.

In the 2014/15 financial year, the allocation of the entire Mental Health Commission budget was \$795m. This is forecasted to expand by \$114m totalling \$909m by 2019/20.

The Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan indicates that the required level of prevention funding by 2020 will be 4%. This equates to \$36.3m of the overall budget.

Currently, there is a decrease in prevention funding forecasted over the forward estimates, with it tipped to decrease to \$12.6m, just 1.9% of the overall budget. This reduction will see a loss of \$8m in overall funding. <sup>(63)</sup>

Early intervention and prevention services supporting young people to be mentally healthy are not only less costly, but they lead to better outcomes for young people earlier in their lives and decrease the number of young people presenting with acute mental illness.

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Increase the amount of funding for prevention services over the forward estimates to meet the demand required in the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan for prevention. Currently there are no plans to meet this target.

COSTING **\$24M**

# Support

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- Recommendation 1: The Council of Australian Governments' mental health reform make children and young people a priority group and include planning for mental health promotion and prevention, early intervention and treatment services and programs.
  - *Prevention and early intervention for mental health problems, Commissioner for Children and Young people* <sup>(64)</sup>
- Issue paper no. 12 identifies: Our program review suggests that investing in the sustainability, development, adaptation and reach of both preventative and early intervention programs and initiatives in Indigenous mental health and social and emotional wellbeing would be a key contribution to the success of the Australian Government's Closing the Gap agenda.
  - *Issues paper no. 12, Pat Dudgeon et al.* <sup>(65)</sup>
- Research estimates that the annual cost of mental health services in Australia is \$20 billion, which includes the costs from loss of productivity and participation in the workforce. From this, it is clear that interventions are required to prevent the onset of mental health problems.
  - *Act Belong Commit website* <sup>(66)</sup>

# 12

## Preventing young people coming into contact with the Justice System

### PRIORITY ISSUE

There is a critical lack of funding and cross-departmental accountability for community based early intervention programs to prevent youth offending.

“I got kicked out of home at 15 so I started couch surfing at hostels and with friends. At the time I wasn't on Centrelink because of my age and had no money to buy anything new, pay for any public transport or accommodation so I started stealing.” - **YOUNG PERSON** <sup>(67)</sup>

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Effective early intervention and prevention programs that work with vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their families, work to address underlying risk factors and can circumvent initial (and ongoing) contact with the justice and child protection systems.

Justice reinvestment is not a new concept, and works by redirecting money spent on prisons to community-based initiatives which aim to address the underlying causes of crime. <sup>(68)</sup>

In the United States, justice reinvestment is being used to better manage prison spending and redirect some of the savings to community programs that reduce re-offending and the demand to build more prisons. This sort of reinvestment is required in Western Australia.

On an average day during 2015-2016, the Department of Corrective Services managed 133 young people in detention. <sup>(69)</sup>

The 2016 budget papers indicate that the 2015/16 Youth Justice Services stream expended \$99m at a cost of \$1,034 a day to keep a juvenile in detention. <sup>(63)</sup> This is equal to \$50.1m (average cost a day x 365 x average young people managed per day), or more than half of the total budget for youth justice services.

With a declining budget forecast over the forward estimates of \$15m <sup>(63)</sup>, a targeted investment of reinstating \$5m, would equate to a difference in young people having contact with the justice system and adding financial pressure to the State.

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Invest in early intervention community based programs, such as intensive mentoring and diversionary programs that reduce crime by addressing the underlying conditions that lead to offending behaviour.

## STRATEGY

Through the Premier of Western Australia, adopt and maintain a whole-of-government strategy to investment in early intervention and crime prevention programs. Not one agency can do it alone.

COSTING **\$5M**

# Support

---

- Recommendation 3.1 Adopt and maintain a whole-of-government commitment to investment in early intervention and prevention programs.
  - *Key Reform and Policy Targets, Social Reinvestment WA* <sup>(42)</sup>
- Four parliamentary committee reports have recommended state governments consider or trial justice reinvestment programs. <sup>(68)</sup>
  - *The Senate and Constitutional Affairs Committee References Committee, Access to Justice Report (2009)*
  - *The Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs, Legislative Council of Western Australia, Inquiry into the transportation of detained persons: the implementation of the Coroner's recommendations in relation to the death of Mr Ward and related matters, 2011*
  - *Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee; Value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia, 2013*
  - *Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, Parliament of Victoria, Inquiry into the supply and use of methamphetamines, particularly Ice, in Victoria, Final Report, 2014*



# Priority Area Four



VALUING YOUNG  
PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE

# 13

## Engaging young people in decision making

### PRIORITY ISSUE

73% of young people surveyed by YACWA indicated that they felt like politicians didn't understand issues affecting young people. This sentiment is not limited to politicians, as there has been an historic lack of direct consultation with young people in the development, design, governance, and evaluation of services and policies affecting them. <sup>(54)</sup>

“Young people feel disengaged from the process, so it is important to get them to feel as if they can really have a say.” - **YOUNG PERSON, CONSULTATION**

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

There is a strong tendency on the part of adults to underestimate the competence of children while at the same time using them in events to influence some cause; the effect is patronising. <sup>(58)</sup>

Young people want to be included in decisions that affect them. They want to have their voice heard. Unfortunately, often they feel like it is a waste of time or patronizing, as one young person in the consultation stated:

“The opinions of young people in policy development and sector reform are taken for granted, almost like they have tokenistic value and are worth nothing.” <sup>(70)</sup>

In WA at 30 June 2015, 19%, or almost one in five people, was aged between 10 and 24. This is important to remember and take into consideration when creating policies that affect this cohort of people, if they are to be successful in their practicality. <sup>(71)</sup>

As a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australian governments are responsible to adhere to all the articles, including article 12, which clearly states ‘Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account’. <sup>(72)</sup> As such, the WA Government has a responsibility to genuinely consult and co-design policies that impact on young people across the State.

# Recommendation

## EXPENDITURE

Engage a group of young people to co-design an online tool (potentially based on oursay.org), that provides a platform for young people and policy makers across all levels of government to interact and discuss ideas, policies and experiences.

## STRATEGY

- Through the Premier of Western Australia, adopt and maintain a whole of government approach to incorporating Child Impact Statements on all policies and government decisions, which identify the impact of proposed policies on children and their families, especially the most vulnerable in the community.
- Ensure that an independent and specialised peak body remains to advocate for useful services and engage with young people.

COSTING **\$0.5M**

# Support

- Article 12: “the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”
  - *Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations* <sup>(73)</sup>
- Recommendation: Novel approaches to working with young people across government to advise, scrutinise and propose policy.
  - *Creating Benefit for All, Dr Philippa Collin et al.* <sup>(74)</sup>
- Recommendation: Innovation funding for youth-led and youth-serving organisations to address the drivers and barriers to participation including poverty, inequality and exclusion.
  - *Creating Benefit for All, Dr Philippa Collin et al.* <sup>(74)</sup>

# 14

## Creating an independent advocacy service for children in care

### PRIORITY ISSUE

In a recent survey of children and young people in the Out of Home Care system, 6% reported they did not feel safe in their current care arrangement, and a further 15% said they did not feel supported in their placement. Additionally, just over one third of children (36%) living in non-family care arrangements completed the survey, which is designed to provide feedback about their care experience, and concerns about their care arrangement. <sup>(75)</sup>

“Nobody was there. Nobody told me that I could go to them. Nobody would just sit down and have a chat with me. Nobody would just check up on me.” - **YOUNG PERSON, RESIDENTIAL CARE** <sup>(76)</sup>

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

“The best informants on the experience of children and young people in Out of Home Care are the children and young people themselves. This group of young people are not always asked about their lives and often describe feeling invisible and overlooked.” <sup>(76)</sup>

Only one Child Advocate position exists for all children and young people in care across WA however, the Advocate is positioned within CPFS, which has potential to create caution or even fear amongst young people that raising a concern through this avenue will get them into trouble.

The Child Advocate is also not widely known amongst children in care, with only 35% of young people, according to those interviewed as part of

the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People's Speaking Out About Raising Concerns in Care Report, were aware the role existed. <sup>(76)</sup>

The WA Commissioner for Children and Young People's report, also highlighted the importance of children and young people having a diverse number of ways to raise concerns, such as technology, mentors and independent people and agencies were important elements for young people to feel confident and able to speak out about their care. This points to the need for a raft of mechanisms to protect young people in out of home care in addressing their complaints and abuse. An Independent child advocate that sits outside of government would be an important addition.

# Recommendation

## EXPENDITURE

Fund the development of a WA Child Protection Advocacy Service, similar in operation to the Mental Health Advocacy Service, with genuine consultation and co-design by young people and the not-for-profit sector. <sup>(77)</sup>

## STRATEGY

Review internal department policies and put in place strategies to ensure that all complaints mechanisms and advocacy services are explained and understood by all Children and Young People in care.

COSTING \$2M

# Support

There are nine principal reasons for offering independent child protection advocacy to children identified in the Independent Advocacy in Child Protection: Guidance for Policy Makers report. <sup>(78)</sup>

1. Empowers children who are going through very difficult times
  2. Safeguards children within child protection procedures and actions
  3. Ensures a fuller picture emerges of the child's life, wishes and concerns and therefore a more credible assessment of their best interests
  4. Increases the child's engagement in child protection processes and outcomes
  5. Provides the child with an additional trusted mechanism for raising concerns
  6. Ensures the child remains everyone's focus
  7. Increases parents' engagement in child protection processes and outcomes
  8. Brings about wider changes in policy and practice
  9. Helps local authorities demonstrate compliance with domestic and international law
    - *Independent Advocacy in Child Protection: Guidance for Policy Makers* <sup>(78)</sup>
- Strategic Recommendation 9: Develop and resource an external child protection oversight process and an independent child advocacy support service in consultation with all stakeholders
    - *Pre-Budget Submission: The Future In Our Hands* <sup>(79)</sup>

## Supporting the inclusion of LGBTIQ young people

### PRIORITY ISSUE

LGBTIQ young people have the highest rates of suicidality of any population in Australia with up to 50% of transgender people having attempted suicide at least once in their lives.<sup>(80)</sup>

“Seeing health professionals in general is often a scary and intimidating experience for transfolk. I’ve learnt the hard way that being a medical professional doesn’t make someone knowledgeable about trans issues... if I wanted to see some kind of mental health professional in the future, I would only see one that had previous exposure to Trans issues so I wouldn’t have to educate them and wouldn’t feel violated.” - **YOUNG PERSON**<sup>(80)</sup>

### WHAT WE’VE HEARD

The elevated risk of mental ill-health and suicidality among LGBTIQ people is not due to sexuality, sex or gender identity in and of themselves but rather due to discrimination and exclusion as key determinants of health.<sup>(80)</sup>

Up to 80% of same-sex attracted and gender questioning young Australians experience public insult, 20% explicit threats and 18% physical abuse.<sup>(80)</sup>

Barriers to health service access include LGBTIQ people’s fear of discrimination or rejection, as well as fear of breach of confidentiality. Unless services are explicitly inclusive, many LGBTIQ people will often assume a lack of understanding and/or potential discrimination.<sup>(80)</sup>

Access to non-judgemental and supportive services and service providers is essential. Service providers who are open, understanding, do not stereotype or assume heterosexuality and are prepared to learn are valued and respected.<sup>(81)</sup>

LGBTIQ-inclusive practice values LGBTIQ people and in no way repeats the heterosexist assumptions, values and practices that have contributed to higher rates of mental ill-health and suicidality among this population. Promotion of services that are actively inclusive of LGBTIQ people is also needed to ensure that communities are aware of and able to access these services.<sup>(80)</sup>

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Fund a centre of excellence to engage with young people who are LGBTIQ and include them in providing training to health providers, assessments of inclusive services, best practice models, advocacy and support to young people who are LGBTIQ.

## STRATEGY

Develop a LGBTIQ Health and Wellbeing Action Plan that articulates the Government's priorities for improving health and wellbeing outcomes among LGBTIQ individuals and communities.

COSTING \$2M

# Support

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- LGBTIQ cultural competency policies which are upfront, explicit and implemented on an organisationally wide basis will enable organisations to build confidence and experience in welcoming and affirming LGBTIQ consumers.
  - *LGBTIQ cultural competency framework, National LGBTIQ Health Alliance* <sup>(82)</sup>
- Recommendation: Build diversity competence, including soft skills, use of gender neutral language, specific LGBTIQ knowledge.
  - *LGBTIQ People Mental Health & Suicide, Gabi Rosenstreich* <sup>(80)</sup>
- Develop specific training regarding gender diversity to assist groups in becoming aware of and sensitive to the needs of trans and intersex people.
  - *Safety, Diversity & Inclusion in LGBTIQ Groups, Living Proud* <sup>(83)</sup>
- Assist groups to become more inclusive through the development of a template of safe space guidelines as well as a complementary training package in order for groups to become more diverse.
  - *Safety, Diversity & Inclusion in LGBTI Groups, Living Proud* <sup>(83)</sup>

## Supporting career pathways for young people with a disability

### PRIORITY ISSUE

Young people with a disability have lower participation rates in the workforce, and are twice as likely to be underemployed. <sup>(84)</sup>

“We are smart but some of us [are] just trapped ... but we have thoughts, feelings and opinions.” - **YOUNG PERSON** <sup>(85)</sup>

### WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Education and training are critical pathways for transitioning successfully into meaningful employment. Education is irrevocably linked with increasing active participation in society, maximising contribution to the Australian economy and reducing the burden on Government.

In Australia, young people with disabilities have significantly lower rates of attainment of both secondary and tertiary education than people without disabilities. In 2013, WA had the lowest proportion of people with disability undertaking VET qualifications. <sup>(86)</sup>

The pathway and preparation for transition from school to adult life is important, in which best practice includes personalised career planning including the utilisation of young people's interests and strengths, developing skills and confidence and building employment experience. <sup>(84)</sup>

There are substantial gaps between students with disabilities and those without, particularly in the attainment of Year 12 or equivalent, vocational education and training qualifications, and participation in university studies.

A 2015 Senate Inquiry into educational attainment of students with disability notes that under education often leads to unemployment, long-term social and economic disadvantage. <sup>(87)</sup>

The Australian National Training Authority estimated the recurring annual cost of not adequately addressing the vocational training needs of people with disabilities is \$18.8 billion. <sup>(88)</sup>

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Invest in projects and initiatives to improve participation rates of young people with disabilities transitioning from school into employment, or vocational education and training (VET) in WA.

## STRATEGY

Research the current state of transition and employment outcomes experienced by young West Australians with a disability and investigate other policy responses to improving school to employment transition for young people with disabilities.

COSTING **\$3M**

# Support

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- Recommendation: Fund research to investigate the current state of transition and employment outcomes experienced by young Australians with a disability and investigate other nation's policy responses to improving school to employment transition.
  - *Transitions to Employment of Australian Young People with Disability and the Ticket to Work Initiative* <sup>(89)</sup>
- National Disability Services of WA (NDS WA) advocates for a localised collaborative approach using the Ticket to Work network model which aims to replicate the typical transition pathways that young people without disability take during their final years of schooling, through the provision of career planning, workplace preparation and work experience with the support of a local network that can ensure these offerings are accompanied by targeted interventions to suit the individual needs and goals of each young person.
  - *NDS WA State Budget Priorities 2017-2018* <sup>(84)</sup>

## Creating culturally safe services

### PRIORITY ISSUE

A lack of cultural competency across government and non-government services means that young people miss out on appropriate care, or feel uncomfortable in asking for help in areas such as, education, mental health, and health services.

“In Australia I’ve found that sometimes I want to explain my problem or my question to someone or my teacher. I always feel I can’t explain very well and if my teacher doesn’t understand my question I feel very upset. I’ve found that it’s the hardest thing to explain something.”

- **YOUNG CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CaLD) PERSON** <sup>(90)</sup>

“When you first come there isn’t much help with school work and other things that children need help with.” - **YOUNG CaLD PERSON** <sup>(90)</sup>

“The teachers underestimate me [because I am from Africa].”

- **YOUNG CaLD PERSON** <sup>(90)</sup>

### WHAT WE’VE HEARD

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who have recently arrived in Australia often find it difficult to seek help from the healthcare system due to the lack of cultural competence of health care providers in the sector.

Young people also felt that often teachers are not diverse enough and/or culturally competent. They feel like they are not receiving adequate support because of teachers lack of cultural competence.

Young people also felt that the curriculum did not have enough content related to mental health and sexual health presented in a culturally competent way, which impeded young people’s access to that information. <sup>(91)</sup>

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Provide funding for the development and delivery of cultural competency and diversity training, in consultation with the CaLD community and young people.

## STRATEGY

Create a cultural and diversity training strategy to be applied across relevant Government departments and portfolios that work with young CaLD people.

COSTING \$1M

# Support

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- Finding: The future development of cultural competence at all levels of organisations and systems will require its inclusion in formal competency standards and organisational development strategies.
  - *The effectiveness of cross cultural training - Department of Social Services* <sup>(92)</sup>
- “In terms of improving access to education and health services, the group agreed that the solution was for service providers to be more culturally competent, and that they needed training to assist them with this.” – Young people, group discussion, A Catalyst for Change.
  - *A Catalyst for change, YACWA, 2016* <sup>(91)</sup>
- Often they said they did not know but some said they would have liked more support settling in to Australia. Other young people said they wanted more widespread understanding about MYAN WA.
  - *CCYP Speak out report* <sup>(90)</sup>



# Priority Area Five



CREATING A STRONG  
YOUTH SECTOR

# Planning the future of the youth homelessness sector

## PRIORITY ISSUE

Of those counted as homeless in the 2011 Census in WA, 3,769 were under the age of 25, however, the ABS acknowledges that youth homelessness is underestimated in the Census. <sup>(93)</sup>

“I didn’t have a future picture... I had to live day by day, because I had nothing else to do. I wanted to go get a house, and I wanted to get a job but I just didn’t see a way of getting there.” - **YOUNG PERSON** <sup>(94)</sup>

## WHAT WE’VE HEARD

“The real costs of homelessness are seen – in dollar terms – across the criminal justice system, welfare agencies, mental health services, schools and in health centres and hospitals.” <sup>(95)</sup>

There is a reported lack of cross-government strategy and coordination in funding for youth homelessness and accommodation services, with most services being underfunded and unable to meet demand.

“The total cost offsets for young people becoming homeless is an average of \$14,986 per person per year. From an economic standpoint, policies that respond to homelessness in ways that avoid these costs to the economy and the Australian community have to be seriously considered.” <sup>(60)</sup>

Currently, there is very little being done in the early intervention space by the State Government.

This is largely in part due to the uncertainty around the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, and the inability of the state to accurately develop strategies because of its uncertainty.

As a result, the *WA State Plan 2010-2013 Opening Doors to Address Homelessness* has expired, with no new plan in place. A strategy document was released in March 2016, calling for action in response. <sup>(95)</sup>

A detailed map of the current services landscape is required. A services plan based on population statistics rather than fluctuating funding, would achieve these objectives (similar to the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan) so that further collaboration amongst service providers, and planning for the future can happen.

# Recommendation

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## STRATEGY

- Instruct the Department for Child Protection and Family Support to develop a service plan that maps current services and develops need for service delivery over the next ten years with input from the not-for-profit sector, regardless of funding availability.
- Develop a youth homelessness strategy in consultation with the sector, with a strong focus on early intervention programs.

# Support

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- The State Government's own policy document, Homelessness in Western Australia, outlines the following areas of future work required that align with these recommendations <sup>(95)</sup>:
  - *Review of current programs*
  - *A consultation process*
  - *Regional mapping and short-term planning*
- “Develop a clear and transparent process for service planning to enable the appropriate allocation of Departmental resources as well as to provide sufficient advance information for service providers, user representatives and other key stakeholders to prepare adequately to participate in the process”.
  - *Review Of Community Sector Services Expenditure, Terry Simpson* <sup>(96)</sup>
- Recommendation 12 - “The Department of Child Safety and Wellbeing develop a resource allocation model to ensure that the resources are allocated transparently across districts and between service providers (both Department of Child Safety and Wellbeing and non-government) and that allocation to service providers can be varied in response to changing needs.”
  - *Review Of The Department For Community Development, Prudence Ford* <sup>(97)</sup>

# Transitioning to equal pay for community service workers

## PRIORITY ISSUE

The Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) has come into effect, and without proper commitment from the State Government, not-for-profit organisations may have to either dramatically reduce services or close their doors entirely. <sup>(98)</sup>

“All of the organisations in the survey indicated that they are either ‘extremely concerned’ or ‘very concerned’ about meeting future employment costs under the ERO.” - **SURVEY OF ORGANISATIONS AFFECTED BY THE ERO’S** <sup>(98)</sup>

## WHAT WE’VE HEARD

The ERO was handed down by the Fair Work Commission <sup>(99)</sup> to gradually increase wages for the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Award over an eight-year period from December 2012 to December 2020. However, the WA Government has not committed to increase funding to the community sector to adequately meet the increased costs of delivering community services throughout the state. This dramatically impacts on the community services sector financial sustainability. Without increased investments from the state government to offset the ERO, organisations will be forced to either reduce staffing or shut programs entirely.

Community Employers WA (CEWA) and the WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS) have led the charge in this area, and have stated in their own Pre-Budget Submission that they remain concerned that a significant number of

organisations may have committed to longer-term service contracts without understanding the need to cost in the growing gap between indexation and wages.

The sector now faces an untenable reality of having to cut services to those in need, to be able to pay fair and just wages.’ <sup>(79)</sup>

A recent survey by CEWA shows that the impact of the ERO is systemic and presents a huge challenge for all community employers. For example: <sup>(98)</sup>

- Small employer – Increases of \$54K to \$64K per year
- Medium employer – Increases of \$260K to \$378K per year
- Large employer – Increases of \$715K to \$1.2M per year

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

Sustain existing service delivery levels of community services across the community services sector by ensuring the cost of the ERO wage obligations is met in state contracting, in line with WACOSS' recommendations.

COSTING **\$25M**

# Support

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- Budget Priority 12: Sustain existing service delivery levels of community services by ensuring the cost of Equal Remuneration Order wage obligations is met.
  - *Pre-Budget Submission: The Future In Our Hands, WACOSS* <sup>(79)</sup>

# Developing effective services through the Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Reforms

## PRIORITY ISSUE

The Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Reforms came into effect from May 2015 with an initial focus on two demonstration sites. Regional Managers Forums have proven to be a critical body for this reform process however, they urgently require additional resourcing and coordination to engage their relative communities in the reforms and future service planning.

In 2015, a YACWA survey found approximately 84% of respondents either knew very little to nothing about the reforms, or knew there were reforms but had no idea what the detail was. <sup>(100)</sup>

## WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Following a review of expenditure <sup>(101)</sup> by Government through a sub-committee of the State's Cabinet in 2013, a set of Investment Priorities and Principles <sup>(102)</sup> were established in May 2015 to inform procurement of services relating to Aboriginal young people across government.

These priorities and principles are what we reference when we talk about the *Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Reforms*. The purpose of the Reform is to try to ensure funds spent on services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more targeted and efficient, and importantly, effective.

This will be achieved by encouraging: partnerships and collaborative approaches, integrated and sustainable service delivery, performance based outcomes, and targeted expenditure for young people who fall between traditional agency boundaries. <sup>(102)</sup>

Full application of the Reforms is to be implemented by no later than 30 June 2017. <sup>(103)</sup>

Regional Managers Forums have been identified as existing bodies that will engage with the community and inform central agencies as to how the principles and priorities will affect procurement in their local area, taking a place-based approach. <sup>(104)</sup>

YACWA has been working in partnership with the Department of Premier and Cabinet across two demonstration sites, Mirrabooka and the Mid West to engage with community service organisations to keep them informed of the process <sup>(105)</sup>, and provide feedback to the Department of Premier and Cabinet about the rollout.

The following recommendations have been developed as a result of this engagement with the sector and with Regional Managers Forums.

# Recommendation

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## EXPENDITURE

1. Provide project staff/secretariat support to each Regional Managers Forum to ensure the priorities and actions identified as important by each RMF can be developed in between meetings without relying solely on the goodwill of the people involved and individual agency support.
2. Provide funding to a central Government team to provide outreach support to Government agencies as the reforms roll out, similar in nature to the role that the Department of Finances' Funding and Contracting Services team played throughout the initial rollout of the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy (2011).

## STRATEGY

Provide additional support to Regional Managers Forums in whatever capacity they require to help them identify and step into the critical role they play in the roll-out of the Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Reforms.

COSTING 1. \$3M 2. \$3M

# Support

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Department of Premier and Cabinet: Despite significant government investment, outcomes for young Aboriginal people remain poor. The Aboriginal Youth Services Investment Priorities and Principles are the State Government's response to the findings of the Aboriginal Youth Expenditure Review 2013 which identified the need for reform of government investment in Aboriginal youth services. <sup>(106)</sup>

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# Explanation of costings

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Pricing and costing is very difficult to determine 100% accurately. At this macro level, we have had to land on actual figures through the following methods:

We have had discussions with key stakeholders who deliver similar reports about how their processes and looked to align our costings with theirs.

We have tried to compare figures to existing or past programs where we are able to source that information for comparative purposes.

Some costings have been based upon state budget paper figures from 2015/16, in particular, specific services, or spending amounts relating to specific streams.

A few we have had to estimate by calculating staffing costs, overheads, service deliver and contingency to the best of our ability.

We would recommend that any action undertaken from this report be accompanied with a cost analysis of the initiative. We will of course be more than willing to assist further if possible, or should you have any enquiries about this report.



# Forging a fair path forward

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