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Sustainable Solutions for a Positive Future

**YACWA'S WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
STATE BUDGET POSITIONING PAPER 2020-2021**

The background features a large, solid blue circle on the right side. To its left, there is a large, semi-transparent orange circle. Overlapping these circles are numerous thin, horizontal orange lines that create a textured, sunburst-like effect. The overall color palette is dominated by shades of blue, orange, and purple.

YACWA ACKNOWLEDGES ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE AS
THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THIS LAND
AND ITS WATERS. WE WISH TO PAY OUR
RESPECT TO ELDERS PAST AND PRESENT
AND EXTEND THIS TO ALL ABORIGINAL
PEOPLE SEEING THIS MESSAGE.

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FOREWORD

YACWA's 2020/21 Western Australian State Budget Positioning Paper (Positioning Paper) is inspired by young people from WA and from around the world who are fighting for change. The School Strikes 4 Climate Change, the gun control movement in America and Black Lives Matter are all youth-led global movements that are driven by the inaction of those in power. This inaction on issues such as climate change, inequality, discrimination and poverty is leading the world down a path of no return, where young people will inherit a society grappling with the debilitating effects caused by the decisions of those in power today.

We, as a community, cannot let this happen and as such YACWA would like to add our voice to growing impetus for change.

It for this reason we have titled our Positioning Paper 'Sustainable Solutions for a Positive Future', calling on the State Government to take a long-term view when determining priorities, so that they make fair and sustainable decisions leading to a positive, safe and healthy world for future generations of young people.

This Positioning Paper is our flagship report which demonstrates YACWA's vision for Western Australia as well as sets the tone for our advocacy in the upcoming year. It builds on the work of existing advocacy and research to provide a succinct outline of a series of key strategic and funding changes that should be included in the upcoming WA State Budget to improve the wellbeing of young people in Western Australia.

As such we have presented our recommendations around the following key issues that we believe significantly impact on the rights of young people in Western Australia and will have a decisive impact on their future:

- 1. Inequality and Marginalisation**
- 2. Welfare and Poverty**
- 3. Health and Wellbeing**
- 4. Employment and Education**
- 5. Youth Voice and Leadership**
- 6. A strong and Sustainable Sector**

In order to truly foster change in society for young people, everyone must come together to facilitate collective action. This is why the recommendations in this document are drawn from all facets of the community, including young people, the youth sector, state and local government as well as the private sector. On behalf of the Youth Affairs Council of WA, our staff, board and members, we are pleased to present this Positioning Paper for the 2020/21 State Budget, and hope that it will encourage you to think about how you can help to sustainably create a positive, safe and healthy future for our state's young people.

Yours faithfully,



Ross Wortham
Chief Executive Officer
Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia



ABOUT THE YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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 State-wide, 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

YACWA would like to thank all people and organisations that contributed to this paper, and pay special thanks to both our members and all young people who participated. We would also like to thank our friends at Loaded Communications for preparing the design. This policy paper was authored by the Policy Team at YACWA and we would like to specifically acknowledge our Policy and Advocacy Officer Stefaan Bruce-Truglio for his skill and ability to pull this paper together.



CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Extensive consultation guided the formation of the issues and recommendations outlined in this submission. This included group and individual consultations, discussions with our peer-led youth advocates and our recent State of the Youth Sector Forum, which was attended by the youth sector, young people and state and local government representatives from metropolitan and regional areas. In addition, we have drawn on YACWA's previous work and consultations, recognising that many of these insights remain relevant to the context of this Positioning Paper.

KEY ANECDOTAL MESSAGES WE HAVE HEARD

"Until we address the systemic flaws that impact on mental health, young people will continue to lack the support they need to improve their wellbeing."

"There needs to be a greater investment into community programs that are designed to support families, which will then serve to improve young people's circumstances that will allow them to engage better with their education."

"Youth engagement must be built into every facet of governance and service delivery. Young people need actual power to influence change so that consultation is not tokenistic"

"We need a holistic whole of system response in the child protection system. In order to be accountable to the community, the Department must engage and work with young people and their families, communities, non-profits and all of government. "

"The value of integrating lived experience and best practice is significant. Government should look to those with the most experience and knowledge on an issue when planning long-term action"

EVIDENCE THAT THE STATUS QUO IS INSUFFICIENT

55%

Aboriginal young people today represent more than 55% of the young people in out-of-home care, a statistic significantly higher than any other state in Australia.

– Department of Communities 2018/19 Annual Report

53%

Over half (53%) of young people released from Banksia Hill Detention Centre returned to sentenced detention within two years of their release.

– Department of Justice 2018/19 Annual Report.

ZERO

There are zero affordable houses in Western Australia for young people on Newstart or youth allowance.

– Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot

**3,132
HOMELESS
CHILDREN**

3,132 children and young people are currently homeless in WA, with 1,921 of those being aged 12-24.

– ABS 2016 Census

58.3%

58.3% of vulnerable families with children have low or very low food security.

– 100 Families WA Baseline Report

33%

33% of young people in Western Australia report a high degree of psychological distress, the second highest rate in the country after Victoria.

– headspace National Mental Health Week Research

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

PRIORITY AREA ONE: INEQUALITY AND MARGINALISATION

WHAT

- 1 Create a Ministerial Portfolio for Equality and as part of the Department for Premier and Cabinet, develop a whole-of-government LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy, to ensure policies and practices of all government organisations and funded services are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ children and young people to address key issues such as:
 - Banning conversion therapy
 - Ensuring homelessness services are accessible and inclusive for LGBTIQ+ young people
 - Better training for doctors and health professionals around transgender issues.
 - Safer placements in child protection for LGBTIQ+ young people.

- 2 Develop an Aboriginal children and young people's strategy that includes strong targets to eliminate overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in care and actions to address the broader causes of child removal and placement in care.
- 3 Establish a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People to facilitate improved oversight and accountability of the child protection system and its engagement with Aboriginal young people in care.

- 4 Implement the recommended changes to youth justice as put forward by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in the 2019 *Youth Justice Issues Paper*.
- 5 Transfer overall management of Banksia Hill Youth Detention Centre from the Department of Justice to the Department of Communities so that they can develop a Strategic Framework to guide a whole of government approach to youth justice
- 6 As an absolute minimum, raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 years to 12 years.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND
CABINET

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND
CABINET

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

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PRIORITY AREA TWO: POVERTY AND WELFARE

WHAT

- 7 Ensure that young people with lived experience as well as the private sector are involved in ongoing implementation of the State Homelessness Strategy and the Affordable Housing Strategy.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

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- 8 Reform the *Residential Tenancies Act* by adopting the recommendations set out by the Make Renting Fair WA Campaign's *Tenancy Ten*

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

PAGE: 30

- 9 Adopt the recommendations of the WA Food Relief Network to tackle food insecurity in Western Australia.

- 10 Conduct an inquiry into the ongoing cost of living increases on food security and nutrition among young people in Western Australia.

- 11 Amend the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* so that a young person's right to remain in care until 21 is guaranteed, alongside transitional supports (e.g. education, employment and housing) as needed.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

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PRIORITY AREA THREE: HEALTH AND WELLBEING

WHAT

- 12 As a matter of urgency work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to conduct a strategic review of all current mental health services that support Aboriginal young people to determine the gaps in current indigenous suicide prevention approaches.
- 13 Develop a strategic framework to guide activities to support the mental health, social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities. This framework should:
- Champion the strength of, and empower, the Aboriginal community-controlled sector;
 - Prioritise investment to address the high rates of suicide among Aboriginal young people
 - Be accompanied by robust investment to provide culturally-secure community based services; and
 - Be developed in partnership with robust community consultation and engagement to respond to perceived priorities across the State.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER
AND CABINET

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- 14 Coordinate the development and implementation of a sector-led harm reduction framework for Western Australia.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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- 15 Develop an across-government strategy to guide the State Government's approach to FASD. This strategy should:
- prioritise prevention initiatives;
 - promote awareness of FASD's impacts as a mainstream disorder, dispelling widespread assumptions that FASD is purely an Indigenous problem;
 - address the interface between FASD and the justice system, with particular focus on youth justice and the Telethon Kids Institute research; and
 - support locally-driven place-based responses to regional and remote issues.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PAGE: 40

- 16 Drastically reverse current trends in emissions by setting a target of 100% renewable energy in Western Australia by 2030.
- 17 Ensure all houses built under the upcoming Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2030 are energy efficient and able to withstand increases in extreme weather due to climate change e.g. heatwaves.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND
ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

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WHAT

- 18 Initiate a collaborative process that maps the entire youth mental health system in Western Australia including services funded by both the State and Federal Government and evaluates current priorities and need.
- 19 Co-design a dedicated Youth Mental Health Strategy that:
 - Redesigns the system to ensure distribution of funding to meet the diverse needs of young people
 - Aligns with ongoing work under the State-wide Youth Strategy and Action Plan for At-Risk Youth currently in development;
 - Supports findings of the *Youth Services Integration Project* championed by the WA Association for Mental Health, with particular focus on improving service accessibility and navigation; and
 - Be accompanied by robust prevention investment for populations of young people at increased risk of mental illness and suicide.
- 20 Clarify the alignment between mental health and disability services under the NDIS and provide a clear and streamlined framework on how young people with chronic mental illnesses can access mental health services and support with financial assistance from the NDIS.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

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PRIORITY AREA FOUR: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

WHAT

- 21 Department of Education to develop a strategic framework to facilitate better partnerships between youth services and schools, provide broad principles of collaboration and improve early identification and intervention responses to support at-risk young people.
- 22 Department of Education to review current expulsion policies for public schools to explore alternate methods of intervention.
- 23 Department of Education to develop a strategic plan for education services at Banksia Hill and transfer all responsibility of education services at the centre to the Department of Education.
- 24 Department of Education to conduct a review of the current Western Australian Curriculum to ensure teaching, assessment and evaluation methods are facilitating the best possible outcomes for youth education.
- 25 Develop a clear guiding framework for youth services to meet employment outcomes and to collaborate with employment providers and services. This could include:
 - Resourcing for youth services to meet and support employment outcomes
 - Resourcing for youth services to up skill and embed knowledge and referral pathways into employment services.
 - Requirements of service agreement deliverables and timeframes to undertake this collaboration.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF JOBS, TOURISM,
SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

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- 26 In consultation with young people and utilising international best practice, review and reshape Western Australia's approach to Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum in a way that is human rights based, incorporative of discussions on pleasure, and inclusive of the diverse experiences of young people.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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PRIORITY AREA FIVE: YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP

WHAT

- 27 Develop a cross-ministerial Youth Advisory Council who are reimbursed for their time and are supported by YACWA to be able to give feedback on systems, legislation, strategies and policies that affect young people across Government.
- 28 Facilitate an annual Youth Summit that is peer-led and captures the views and feedback of young people across the state on systemic issues that affect them.

LEAD AGENCY

WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT

PAGE: 54

- 29 Develop a Youth Engagement Strategy providing clear, accessible and appropriate information on the Child Safe Standards to young people so that they are aware of their rights and abilities under the Standards.

WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

PAGE: 56

PRIORITY AREA SIX: A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE SECTOR

WHAT

- 30 Commission research to establish the effectiveness of current early-intervention programs, where gaps currently exist, and to quantify long term savings in reducing the demand of tertiary and crisis services
- 31 Undertake a review process of current place-based initiatives for young people in Western Australia to determine community need.
- 32 Revise the Non-Government Human Service Sector Indexation Policy, ensuring the wage growth and costs of service provision are more accurately aligned to government funding.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

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WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT

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DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

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EXPENDITURE RECOMMENDATIONS

PRIORITY AREA ONE: INEQUALITY AND MARGINALISATION

WHAT

- 33 Fund the development of a state-wide peak body which carries out systemic advocacy for LGBTIQ+ young people.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT

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- 34 Finance additional services for young people in Banksia Hill that prioritise a therapeutic, trauma-informed and rehabilitative focus. This may include skills-based programs, youth development programs, additional counselling services and community based-orders integrated with local service providers.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

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- 35 Fund Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver integrated parenting support and early child development for families at-risk across the state and to provide care arrangements for those in care.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

PAGE: 22



PRIORITY AREA TWO: POVERTY AND WELFARE

WHAT

36 As part of a new State Affordable Housing Strategy, drastically increase the amount of social housing in Western Australia as well as designate a specific quota of housing for young people.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

PAGE: 28

37 Build into all upcoming State Government strategy and procurement, including *10 Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-30* and *Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-30* funding to develop a suite of youth specific homelessness services that cut across the spectrum of intervention – from prevention to rehabilitation – as well as an accompaniment of crisis, transitional, and long-term housing.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

PAGE: 30

38 This includes:

- A statewide Housing First approach specifically designed for young people, that provides young people with no barrier housing combined with intensive support to address any complex issues.
- A range of new crisis accommodation and outreach options to reduce the critical burden on current services and to cater to the needs of diverse cohorts e.g.
 - Young people aged 10-15;
 - LGBTIQ+ young people;
 - ATSI young people and
 - Young women escaping Family and Domestic Violence

39 Support low-income young people and families experiencing extreme financial hardship by increasing the concessions available for household payments.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

40 Support Debt Amnesty programmes for vulnerable young people struggling to meet major utility increases.

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41 Fund the development of youth-specific, culturally informed mental health community bed-based services to support young people with high and complex mental health needs or alcohol and other drug addiction.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

PAGE: 32

42 Fund the development of alternative rehabilitative pathways for young people who are at risk of recidivism and also before entering the justice system.

PRIORITY AREA THREE: HEALTH AND WELLBEING

WHAT

- 43 Fund ACCHS to deliver culturally appropriate support to Aboriginal young people to address issues such as intergenerational trauma across the state.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
PAGE: 36

- 44 Coordinate with the Pill Testing Australia to trial a collaborative pill-testing program using similar methods as the ACT at key music festivals in Western Australia.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
WA POLICE
PAGE: 38

- 45 Fund the development of specific resources to assist mental health services, schools, families and other services to support young people to deal with climate anxiety.

- 46 Finance the development of a fund that supports vulnerable low-income young people and families to transition to renewable energy.

- 47 Host a Youth Climate Forum where young people can have a say in the direction of Western Australia's climate action.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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- 48 Develop a statewide Transcultural Mental Health Service that can provide specialist support and translation services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and their families.

- 49 Evaluate the current state of mental health services in rural and remote areas of Western Australia and support organisations to integrate online platforms to reduce service gaps.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
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PRIORITY AREA FOUR: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

WHAT

- 50 Fund further expansion of the 'Big Picture Education' school model to at least two new schools by 2020 in areas of low-socioeconomic status and high levels of disengagement.

- 51 Facilitate a trial of a place-based community partnership between services and schools in identified regional and/or remote areas where students experience significant educational disadvantage. This should include resourcing services to provide counselling, case management, group work in schools, employment support and to provide training to teachers on trauma informed practice and cultural competence.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
DEPARTMENT OF JOBS, TOURISM, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION
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- 52 In consultation with young people, fund the development or expansion of a peer-led education program to provide integrated sexual health education in the public-school system.

- 53 Fully fund and expand Inclusive Education WA to all public schools across Western Australia

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PAGE: 50

PRIORITY AREA FIVE: YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND VOICE

WHAT

- 54 Provide long term funding in the forward estimates to independent systemic advocacy for young people from key vulnerable demographics, such as:
- Young people identifying as LGBTIQ+
 - Young people with a disability
 - Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds
 - Young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
 - Young people from regional Western Australia
 - Young people with experience in residential care and juvenile detention
 - Young women
 - Young Carers
- 55 Implement the recommendations around developing a single independent oversight body as outlined in the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, including;
1. Oversight of organisational facilities and compliance monitoring for the Child Safe Standards
 2. Systemic advocacy functions with the power to monitor laws, policies and practices that concern children and young people and provide recommendations to Parliament for reform, and;
 3. Investigative powers to support a network of proactive individual advocates, that provide regular visitation and complaints management to young people in institutional settings
- 56 Fund the youth sector so that they are able to have the capacity required to meet the service changes that will happen as part of adherence to new child safe standards.

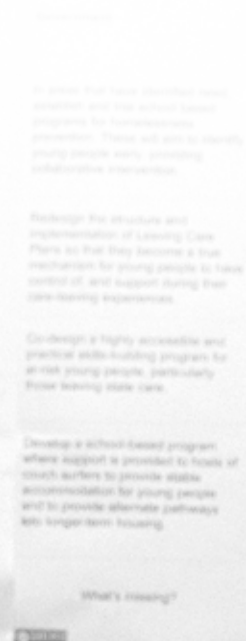
LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

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PRIORITY AREA SIX: A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE SECTOR

WHAT

57 Match funding in early intervention to meet targets set out in strategies such as the *Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025* and ensure that all strategies moving forward prioritise early intervention and prevention

58 Based on the Communities for Children model, implement a trial place-based model in select regional or metropolitan communities that deliver place-based solutions to local community issues and improves service capacity and community cohesion in order to improve youth outcomes.

59 Ensure the cost of the Equal Remuneration Order wage obligations are met in State Government contracting and budget forward estimates on top of announced increases to homelessness services, so that existing service delivery levels of community services can be maintained across the sector.

LEAD AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES
WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

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ISSUE

Fostering a whole of government approach to LGBTIQ+ Inclusion

WHAT WE KNOW

There are currently a number of policy initiatives and strategic reforms underway that provide action in regards to the specific issues facing LGBTIQ+ young people, however these continue to be siloed within Departments. This means clear gaps emerge in services for LGBTIQ+ young people given there is no cross-government aligning body that facilitates a prioritised systemic focus and strategic coordination when addressing the needs of LGBTIQ+ young people.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Traditionally the State Government's approach to LGBTIQ+ issues has been concentrated through the Department of Health, and this is seen through the release of the *Western Australian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex Health Strategy 2019–2024*. Whilst this Strategy is needed and significantly valuable to supporting LGBTIQ+ young people in WA accessing Health Services, this siloed means that the needs of LGBTIQ+ young people that require a targeted approach are often sidelined or generalised within broad youth policies and programs across the government. Issues facing LGBTIQ+ young people that don't sit clearly with the Department of Health cannot be fully addressed when siloed within the remit of one department.

The need for a whole-of-government strategy is highlighted in the current lack of specialised and inclusive homelessness servicesⁱ and crisis accommodation for LGBTIQ+ young people. This is an issue that is not directly addressed by the Department of Health, and yet not prioritised by the Department of Communities under whose responsibility it sits.

There is currently no whole-of-government strategy for LGBTIQ+ Inclusion, no specific ministerial or departmental portfolio, no Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality and no funded specific peak body to support these young people.ⁱⁱ Without a clear strategic direction across Government, legislative reform and strategic initiatives addressing the needs of LGBTIQ+ young people will continue to be progressed in an ad-hoc and siloed manner. Some other states in Australia have created an office or a strategic portfolio that coordinates cross-government action targeting LGBTIQ+ people;

- Victoria currently has a specific LGBTIQ+ Equality Portfolioⁱⁱⁱ, which includes Minister for Equality, an equality directorate in the Department of Premier and Cabinet and a Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality^{iv}.
- South Australia had a cross-government Strategy for the Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer People (LGBTIQ) 2014–2016^v.

The Western Australian State Government must heed these examples across Australia and facilitate a coordinated cross-government approach to addressing the issues and discrimination that LGBTIQ+ young people face in Western Australia.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Create a Ministerial Portfolio for Equality and as part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, develop a whole-of-government LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy, to ensure policies and practices of all government organisations and funded services are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ children and young people to address key issues such as:
 - Banning conversion therapy
 - Ensuring homelessness services are accessible and inclusive for LGBTIQ+ young people
 - Better training for doctors and health professionals around transgender issues.
 - Safer placements in child protection for LGBTIQ+ young people.

EXPENDITURE

Fund the development of a state-wide peak body which carries out systemic advocacy for LGBTIQ+ young people.

ISSUE

Empowering ACCOs to prevent Aboriginal young people from entering care and to provide care to those who do need care and protection

WHAT WE KNOW

The number of Aboriginal young people having contact with the Western Australian child protection system continues to increase. Aboriginal young people today represent more than 55% of the young people in out-of-home care, a statistic significantly higher than any other state in Australia.^{vi}

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Despite a very clear and critical issue of over-representation, the State Government continues to invest a significantly lower proportion of funds into intensive family support and family support than any other state or territory in Australia, investing only 4.8% of its total spending in out of home care, compared to 27.1% in Victoria^{vii}. Child protection investment has followed the same trends as elsewhere in Government, with early intervention and prevention spending reducing or failing to rise, whilst costs in care continue to expand.

Without strong long-term investment in early intervention, these costs, and therefore the number of Aboriginal young people in care, will continue to rise. Family Matters reports that the population of Aboriginal young people in care is predicted to more than double over the next 10 years, and therefore levels of over-representation will further increase.

Despite Aboriginal young people being vastly overrepresented in care, the State Government only spends 12% of its funding to external agencies on Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) a figure which is significantly less when you consider it as a proportion of total expenditure^{viii}. Yorganop is Western Australia's only ACCO funded by the State Government to provide placement services for Aboriginal children and young people. In 2017/18, they received funding to provide care arrangements for only 4.6% of the 2,452 Aboriginal young people in care, a further 978 Aboriginal children and young people were living in non-indigenous care arrangements and only 65% were placed in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle^{ix}.

ACCOs across the state should be fully funded to deliver both early intervention and care services for Aboriginal young people. Aboriginal young people and their families should be supported by ACCOs to maintain their connection to culture and community, and ACCOs in turn should be supported by systemic reform that enshrines empowerment and funding that builds their capacity to meet this growing need. This is the most effective way to address pathways leading young people into out of home care, and to heal the effects of ongoing intergenerational trauma.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Develop an Aboriginal children and young people's strategy that includes strong targets to eliminate overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in care and actions to address the broader causes of child removal and placement in care.
- Establish a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People to facilitate improved oversight and accountability of the child protection system and its engagement with Aboriginal young people in care.

EXPENDITURE

Fund Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver integrated parenting support and early child development for families at-risk across the state and to provide care arrangements for those in care.

Reforming the Youth Justice System in Western Australia

WHAT WE KNOW

Youth Justice in Western Australia has made little progress since the last State Budget, where YACWA called for radical change to fix this broken system. YACWA has called for reform in Banksia Hill Detention Centre for a number of years, yet little has been done to fix the problems with the State's only youth detention centre.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Recidivism is a significant issue in the justice system in Western Australia, with Banksia Hill being heavily criticised for its lack of therapeutic, trauma-informed and restorative approaches to rehabilitation, instead the practice often resorts to increasingly punitive measures as a default. The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services has released a number of reports regarding Banksia Hill and it's increasingly punitive focus. They found since early 2016, Banksia Hill has seen an increased number of incidents involving assaults, misconduct and restraint. Such incidents are only a small part of long periods of crisis and recovery for Banksia Hill ^x, including ongoing instability, poor conditions and allegations of misconduct ^{xi}.

As a result of this instability, Banksia Hill has consistently failed in its mandate to rehabilitate young people to transition back into independent living;

- The majority of young people who are currently under youth justice supervision in WA have previously been involved in the youth justice system for other offences ^{xii}.
- In 2017/18, 93% of young people under youth justice supervision in WA had previously been sentenced to community-based supervision and 67% had previously been in detention for other offences ^{xiii}.

- The WA Department of Justice reports that in 2018/19 over half (53%) of young people returned to detention within two years of their release from detention ^{xiv}.

In order to improve outcomes for young people in the juvenile justice system, more focus is needed on diversionary and rehabilitative programs in order to reduce young people both entering and re-entering the justice system. Whilst positive initiatives such as the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy, 'Youth in Emergency Services' program and Target 120 have been announced and are welcome, these measures in isolation will not solve the ongoing crisis in juvenile detention in Western Australia.

A whole-of-government, collaborative approach to youth justice is required and must be led by the Department of Communities so that a transition to a rehabilitative focus can be made easier. Cross-government collaboration including education, child protection and family support, health, housing and police is critical to ensure youth justice services can create better outcomes for at-risk young people in Western Australia.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Implement the recommended changes to youth justice as put forward by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in the *2019 Youth Justice Issues Paper*.
- Transfer overall management of Banksia Hill Youth Detention Centre from the Department of Justice to the Department of Communities so that they can develop a Strategic Framework to guide a whole of government approach to youth justice
- As an absolute minimum, raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 years to 12 years.

EXPENDITURE

Finance additional services for young people in Banksia Hill that prioritise a therapeutic, trauma-informed and rehabilitative focus. This may include skills-based programs, youth development programs, additional counselling services and community based-orders integrated with local service providers.





two.

PRIORITY AREA TWO:

POVERTY AND WELFARE

ISSUE

Ending Youth Homelessness

WHAT WE KNOW

Youth Homelessness is a critical issue facing young people in Western Australia. Over 3,000 children and young people were reported as homeless across the state on Census night in 2016 and 21% of the entire homeless population in Western Australia are under 25 ^{xv}.

The often-hidden nature of homelessness, through couch-surfing and housing instability, means the real figure of homeless young people in Western Australia may be much higher.

Collective efforts to end youth homelessness are at a critical juncture in Western Australia. *The Youth Homelessness Action Plan* (the YHAP) launched in November 2019 forms part of these collective efforts and attempts to engender a whole of community response to youth homelessness. This Positioning Paper is not the panacea of our advocacy on youth homelessness, however and for a broader look at our key asks to Government, as well as collective community efforts, please see the YHAP ^{xvi}.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

The last few years have seen multiple strategic documents in development, including State Government strategies on housing and homelessness and a community-led *10 Year Strategy to End Homelessness 2018-2028*, including the YHAP. This is a unique and powerful opportunity to truly carry out a whole of community response to end homelessness, and so we cannot risk reverting back to old silos predicated on reluctance to share power and responsibility.

Critically the voice of those with lived experience as well as the financial clout of the private sector must be utilised and enshrined into all collaborative efforts in order for it to be a true whole of community approach.

Secure, affordable and appropriate housing is both a basic human right and essential to providing a stable basis for young people. As a result, cross-collaboration between the *Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2030* and the Government's *10 Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-30* are key if Western Australia is to properly address the issue of homelessness. Both homelessness services and social and affordable housing are overburdened and so it is absolutely integral that these issues are not addressed in isolation. There are almost 14,000 people on the waitlist for public housing ^{xvii} and wait times sitting at around 94 weeks. ^{xviii} TINOCA, Youth Future's crisis accommodation service had to turn away 9 out of 10 young people attempting to access the service due to high demand ^{xix}. Significant gaps in services also currently exist, with young people aged 10-15, transgender young people and young women escaping family and domestic violence having few accessible crisis accommodation options

to accommodate and support their unique needs ^{xx}. Drastic increases in social and affordable housing are required, as well as a more diverse range of crisis accommodation options for young people.

Prevention is key to addressing the pathways that lead into homelessness, and ensuring young people are diverted from long-term rough sleeping to prevent the issue becoming entrenched. Early intervention programs such as Reconnect have demonstrated considerable success in preventing those at-risk from falling into homelessness ^{xxii}.

Another high profile intervention approach, Housing First, is internationally renowned for having significant demonstrable effects in preventing rough sleeping from becoming entrenched. Whilst Housing

First models in Western Australia such as 50 Lives 50 Homes have been targeted towards adults, international evidence has shown that when tailored to the specific needs of young people, Housing First is an effective intervention for young people at risk of chronic rough sleeping ^{xxiii}.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND*

STRATEGIC

- Ensure that young people with lived experience as well as the private sector are involved in ongoing implementation of the State Homelessness Strategy and the Affordable Housing Strategy.

EXPENDITURE

Build into all upcoming State Government strategies and procurement processes, including the *10 Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-30* and the *Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-30*, funding to develop a suite of youth specific homelessness services that cut across the spectrum of intervention – from prevention to rehabilitation – as well as an accompaniment of crisis, transitional, and long-term housing. This includes:

- **A statewide Housing First approach specifically designed for young people, that provides young people with no barrier housing combined with intensive support to address complex issues.**
- **A range of new crisis accommodation and outreach options to reduce the critical burden on current services and to cater to the needs of diverse cohorts e.g.**
 - Young people aged 10-15;
 - LGBTIQ+ young people;
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and
 - Young women escaping Family and Domestic Violence
- **As part of a new State Affordable Housing Strategy, drastically increase the amount of social housing in Western Australia as well as designate a specific quota of housing for young people.**

* Please see the *Youth Homelessness Action Plan* for a detailed look at our key policy asks around youth homelessness.

Enabling young people to live in safe, stable and secure housing

WHAT WE KNOW

Not only do we need to make sure that there is enough affordable housing and homelessness services to prevent vulnerable children, young people and their families from entering homelessness, we also need to ensure that they are able to maintain safe, stable and secure long term living, whether that be in a rental or through owning a home.

Given increasing wait lists for public housing, vulnerable young people are often forced to enter the private market. Young people living in private rentals often spend over 40% of their income on rents. The affordability of suitable private rental accommodation and the laws governing private rentals is a key factor in whether someone ends up becoming homeless.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Young people are much more likely to be living in a private rental than owning their own home. They are also becoming increasingly more likely to spend more than 10 years renting before they are able to afford their own home.^{xxiv} Private renters are more than twice as likely and public renters more than six times as likely as home owners to be at risk of poverty. This means that more and more vulnerable young people could be forced into homelessness^{xxv}.

Factors in WA that currently disadvantage young people are:

- **Rising costs of living:** significantly over the last few years in Western Australia with an average annual increase of 5.53% over the last five years. This means that from 2014 to 2018, the representative Western Australian household will pay an extra \$1,510 per annum as a result^{xxvi} These increases have been part of the State Government's plan to increase revenue and control expenditure, meaning low-income and disadvantaged families and young people have shouldered much of the economic burden of the State's poor finances. Many of those hit hardest

by rises in the cost of living are those receiving social support payments such as Newstart and Youth Allowance.

- **Food Insecurity:** Food insecurity is responsible for a growing burden on vulnerable people across the nation and is likely to be entrenched over a long period of time, with a small likelihood to escape^{xxvii}. The *100 Families WA Study* also reported that 58.3% of families with children surveyed had low or very low food security and young people are also a significant group likely to experience food insecurity^{xxviii}.
- **Rental Laws and Discrimination:** The *Residential Tenancies Act* as it currently exists gives landlords significant power to evict tenants without reason, increase rent unreasonably and prevent renters to make small modifications to the property or own pets^{xxix}. Those in public housing also have fewer protections than those in private rental, despite being some of the most vulnerable people in the community. Over 55% of people under 35 report being discriminated against whilst renting, 14% more likely than those over 35. 22% said that the discrimination was because of their age.^{xcvi}

Despite the State Government commendably joining the calls for the Federal Government to Raise the Rate ^{xxx}, more can be done at a state-based level to ensure that young people are able to afford to live securely and not be at risk of homelessness.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Reform the *Residential Tenancies Act* by adopting the recommendations set out by the Make Renting Fair WA Campaign's *Tenancy Ten.* ^{xcvii}
- Adopt the recommendations of the WA Food Relief Network to tackle food insecurity in Western Australia.
- Conduct an inquiry into the ongoing cost of living increases on food security and nutrition among young people in Western Australia.

EXPENDITURE

Support low-income young people and families experiencing extreme financial hardship by increasing the concessions available for household payments.

Support Debt Amnesty programmes for vulnerable young people struggling to meet major utility increases.

Supporting those transitioning out of institutionalised care

WHAT WE KNOW

Transitions out of institutionalised and/or care settings of all forms are incredibly vulnerable periods for young people e.g. exiting juvenile detention, out-of-home care and/or acute mental health and alcohol/other drug services. Young people may exit into homelessness, enter/re-enter the justice system and are at high-risk of a multitude of negative outcomes ^{xxxi} ^{xxxii}. Transitional supports can be insufficient to prepare a young person to exit into independence, as often rigid service structures and priorities and inadequate funding creates a gap ^{xxxiii} which young people can fall into at a time when they need service support the most.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Transitional supports across multiple critical systems that affect young people in Western Australia are often grossly inadequate:

- Young people leaving out of home care across the state are often forced to live independently at 18, as there is currently no legislative provisions guaranteeing them an extended stay in care until the age of 21. According to the Auditor General 65% of young people who are eligible for transitional support do not get it early enough or at all, putting them at higher risk of being homeless, unemployed, missing out on education and training, and not getting the physical and mental health care they need. ^{xxxiv}
- Banksia Hill Detention Centre has faced repeated criticisms for its handling of juvenile detention; multiple Office of the Inspector for Custodial Services Reports have highlighted its poor rehabilitative functions and overly punitive tactics. Damningly this has led to WA having the highest youth recidivism rate in the nation, with 53% of young people returning to juvenile detention within 2 years. ^{xxxv}

- Whilst there are a number of secure mental health beds and generalised step-up step-down services available for young people in WA's health system, there are currently no youth specific sub-acute services available to young people, thus meaning that young people cannot access tailored support that may allow them to transition from hospital treatment in a supportive environment aimed at achieving further symptom reduction and recovery or to avoid hospital admission altogether. This service is absolutely critical to ensuring young people do not exit acute mental health care or addiction rehabilitation into homelessness. Young people taking part in the WA Association of Mental Health's Youth Mental Health Services Integration Project identified that often the mental health system is at its weakest when especially vulnerable young people are given a discharge plan and led to seek community support ^{xxxvi}. The State Government has moved in the right direction with its investment and now it must commit to a specialist step-up step-down centre that can provide young people with targeted support to address their mental health issues and transition into independent living.

It is absolutely critical that specialist transitional policies, programs and services are developed to fill the gaps between transitions and ensure that young people don't exit out of institutionalised or care settings into homelessness or other worsening outcomes.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Amend the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* so that a young person's right to remain in care until 21 is guaranteed, alongside transitional supports (e.g. education, employment and housing) as needed.

EXPENDITURE

Fund the development of youth-specific, culturally informed mental health community bed-based services to support young people with high and complex mental health needs or alcohol and other drug addiction.

Fund the development of alternative rehabilitative pathways for young people who are at risk of recidivism and also before entering the justice system.





three.

PRIORITY AREA THREE:
**HEALTH AND
WELLBEING**

Taking urgent action in the face of the current Aboriginal youth suicide rates

WHAT WE KNOW

The state of Aboriginal youth suicide in Western Australia is at a crisis point:

- Around one quarter of suicide deaths among Aboriginal people in Australia occur in Western Australia despite the fact that Western Australia accounts for just 14% of the nation's Aboriginal population ^{xxxvii}.
- Of the 102 suicides between 2005-2014 by Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, 69 (68%) were completed by individuals less than 30 years old ^{xxxviii}.
- In February 2019 the WA State Coroner released a report investigating 13 deaths of children and young people in less than four years in the Kimberley region. The report stated the children and young people were intrinsically affected by intergenerational trauma, and the efforts of mainstream services to address this were not accessible or effective to address this complex issue ^{xxxix}.

Vulnerable populations, such as Aboriginal young people, are in dire need of greater support and a drastic shift in policy approaches are needed in order to address these alarming suicide rates, however there is still little urgency in the State Government's response ^{xl}. There was no new funding for Aboriginal-specific suicide prevention initiatives in this year's budget.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

The government has maintained a broad focus on mental health services in the 2019/20 budget announcements; investing in areas such as additional funding for the Suicide Prevention Strategy to allow service continuation while a new strategy is developed along with developing more generalist acute mental health units and community based units. As part of a new *Western Australian Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2021 – 2025*, the government has promised the development of a *Western Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy* with dedicated regional streams.

Whilst additional funding for the Suicide Prevention strategy, as well as an Aboriginal specific suicide prevention strategy is a positive shift, it is disappointing to see that an immediate response to the Aboriginal youth suicide crisis has not been announced. The draft strategy also demonstrates a considerable lack of explicit detail about how regional differences will be met and fails to provide a clear roadmap with innovative actions to address gaps in Aboriginal suicide prevention.

While we await the development of a new strategy, in order to drive targeted and innovative new investment, immediate services are required to meet dire need — particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led approaches to support young people. YACWA is disappointed this immediate need

has not been acknowledged, with a number of key Aboriginal-led programs available for expansion. As a matter of urgency the State Government must fund Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) to be able to have a greater role in WA's mental health services landscape that supports Aboriginal young people.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- As a matter of urgency work with ACCHS to conduct a strategic review of all current mental health services that support Aboriginal young people to determine the gaps in current indigenous suicide prevention approaches.
- Develop a strategic framework to guide activity to support the mental health, social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities. This framework should:
 - Champion the strength of, and empower, the Aboriginal community-controlled sector;
 - Prioritise investment to address the high rates of suicide among Aboriginal young people
 - Be accompanied by robust investment to provide culturally-secure community based services; and
 - Be developed in partnership with robust community consultation and engagement to respond to perceived priorities across the State.

EXPENDITURE

Fund ACCHS to deliver culturally appropriate support to Aboriginal young people to address issues such as intergenerational trauma across the state.

Prioritising a Harm Minimisation approach to alcohol and drug issues

WHAT WE KNOW

Drug overdoses and drug incidents at music festivals is an issue that overwhelmingly affects young people and is an issue that young people have been strongly advocating around. Whilst there have been no drug-related deaths at Western Australian festivals, the debate around pill-testing has been a prominent national issue since six young people in New South Wales died over a period of 13 months. The risk of deaths occurring at Western Australian festivals is still prevalent, as research indicates that Australian festival attendees can be at risk of drug-related harms ^{xli}.

Pill-testing is a national and internationally trialled evidence-based harm reduction approach that has significant support from young people and medical experts, including the Australian Medical Association ^{xlii}, to be implemented as a nationwide service. Despite this fact, no consideration has been given by the state government to explorations of its efficacy in Western Australia in a period where we can be proactive in preventing the drug related deaths and harm that has occurred in New South Wales from happening in WA.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

For a significant time, harm reduction has been a key pillar of the national approach to drug use. Since 1985, Australia's National Drug Strategy has been 'underpinned by an objective of minimising the harms associated with alcohol, tobacco, illicit drug and pharmaceutical use' with harm reduction being a key tenet of all efforts to address alcohol and drug use.

Needle and syringe programs (NSPs) were a flagship campaign implemented under this approach intending to limit the spread of HIV/AIDs. These have been proven to be highly effective and cost-effective services that reduce the transmission of blood-borne viruses, protecting both individual drug users and the community. Australia's world-leading early adoption of the program resulted in the nation having one the lowest rates of HIV among people who inject drugs in

the world. Between 2000 and 2009 alone, NSPs were estimated to have directly averted 32,050 new cases of HIV and 96,667 cases of hepatitis which has saved approximately \$1.28 billion in healthcare costs ^{xliii}.

The State Government's flagship Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce was developed in order to explore the illicit harms associated with drug use. This Taskforce put forward the view "there needs to be a comprehensive public consideration of the ways we treat currently illegal drugs in our community, which recognises the limitations of criminalisation and imprisonment of drug users and considers alternative non-prohibition models for drugs including those which are being trialed and implemented in other countries". The Taskforce recommended that this be done through a bipartisan parliamentary committee. Whilst we commend the Government for calling this committee, we are disappointed to see that despite overwhelming evidence in favour of pill testing and the recommendations from the Taskforce, the Government remains steadfast in its opposition to pill testing ^{xliv}.

Pill testing as a harm reduction approach has had significant national and International success in effectively preventing young people from drug related deaths and harm;

- At the 2nd national pill testing pilot run by Pill Testing Australia (PTA) at Canberra's Groovin the Moo Festival, seven dangerous and potentially toxic substances out of 170 tests were found and in each case, upon learning of their potential harms, each patron decided to discard the drug, potentially preventing serious injury or death. This trial was a collaborative community effort, with festival organisers, government and police and health services supporting its implementation. The service was also well-received by patrons with many stating that they would change their behaviour by reconsidering or taking less of the substances in their possession if they were found to be harmful ^{xlvi}.
- Since the implementation of pill testing in Switzerland, there have been zero ecstasy related deaths ^{xlvii}.
- In 2014, the Netherlands' official pill testing service, DIMS, found a lethal batch of pills containing the toxic chemical PMA. This immediately triggered a national mass media campaign and as a result there were no deaths. In the UK, where no pill-testing service was available at the time, four people died after consuming pills from the same batch. ^{xcviii}

- At a time where festival drug-related incidents were at their highest on record in the UK, the introduction of pill testing at one UK festival in 2016 resulted in a 95% reduction in hospitalisations from the previous year (from 19 to 1) ^{xlix}.
- A survey of young people in Austria found that two thirds of people who accessed pill-testing services decided they would not consume a substance if it was found to contain potentially toxic chemicals ^l.

Drug overdoses and incidents at music festivals are an issue that overwhelmingly affects young people. In a national study done by the National Council on Drugs and Alcohol, 82.5% of young people surveyed (2,335) said that they support the implementation of pill testing ^{li}.

The results from this shows that rather than simply telling young people not to take a drug, which is a policy that has failed for decades, young people want to be given as much knowledge as possible so that they can make an informed choice over what they are taking. This program also needs to be part of a larger whole of government and sector harm reduction approach to alcohol and drug use.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Coordinate the development and implementation of a sector-led harm reduction framework for Western Australia.

EXPENDITURE

Coordinate with PTA to trial a collaborative pill-testing program using similar methods as the ACT at key music festivals in Western Australia ^{lii}.

Informing a whole of sector response to Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

WHAT WE KNOW

Despite recent revelations of the widespread prevalence of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in children and young people in juvenile detention, the last state budget failed to announce any system wide action to tackling the issue. FASD is defined by severe neurodevelopmental impairments that result from brain damage caused by alcohol exposure before birth. ^{liii} YACWA looks again to research from the Telethon Kids Institute which found more than one-third of young people detained in Banksia Hill Detention Centre had FASD, the majority undiagnosed. While guided by the *National FASD Strategic Action Plan 2018–2028*, Western Australia lacks locally driven and relevant approaches to addressing the unique issues faced in our State.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

The impact of FASD on mental health and disengagement with education is still under-researched. In order to properly identify the signs and symptoms of FASD so young people can be properly supported, services need to understand how many young people are presenting to services with undiagnosed FASD, and how existing services can integrate FASD-appropriate support. ^{liv} Our educational system is absolutely critical in this and particular focus is needed on expanding investment to address educational disadvantage in regional areas. The top 10 most educationally disadvantaged areas in Western Australia are located in regional and remote communities ^{lv} and this means that many teachers and schools in these areas simply do not have the knowledge and resources to properly identify and support young people with FASD.

A study conducted in the remote Fitzroy Valley Indigenous community in Western Australia found very high rates of FASD in many remote communities, with the number of cases diagnosed at 194 per 1,000 births for children born between 2002 and 2003. ^{lvi} Given the aforementioned disproportionate levels of young people with FASD in Banksia Hill as well as Aboriginal young people, more culturally informed programs are needed in these regional areas with high levels of FASD to ensure young people are diverted away from the justice system. Existing research has shown that initiatives led by Aboriginal people, such as the Yiriman Project, have demonstrated better outcomes by more effectively facilitating prevention and reducing recidivism ^{lvii}.

If we ensure that a greater awareness of FASD is developed, Government, policy makers, and services can ensure that its impact is better recognised to ensure that young people do not disengage with education, received better service support to meet their needs, and are prevented from coming into contact with the justice system. ^{lviii}

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Develop an across-government strategy to guide the State Government's approach to FASD. This strategy should:
 - prioritise prevention initiatives;
 - promote awareness of FASD's impacts as a mainstream disorder, dispelling widespread assumptions that FASD is purely an Indigenous problem;
 - address the interface between FASD and the justice system, with particular focus on youth justice and the Telethon Kids Institute research; and
 - support locally-driven place-based responses to regional and remote issues.

EXPENDITURE

Commission a research project into the impacts of FASD on young people presenting with mental health issues, alcohol and/or drug abuse, disengagement with education, engagement with crisis services and/or the juvenile justice system to better inform a community response to FASD.

Increase funding for existing Aboriginal community owned diversionary initiatives, such as the Yiriman project so that they can support young people with FASD to prevent them from entering or re-entering the juvenile justice system.

Tackling Climate Change and Youth Climate Anxiety

WHAT WE KNOW

Action on climate change is something that young people across the world are leading the charge on; individuals like Greta Thunberg are amplifying the voice of millions of young people worldwide who are protesting the inaction of their Federal and State Governments. In Australia, around 10,000 school students, young people and other supporters marched in the School Strike 4 Climate Action in September 2019.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Young people are becoming increasingly concerned over their future in as a result of climate change:

- 75% of young people aged 14-18 nationwide want Australia to take action on climate change and 88% want the country to transition from fossil fuels to renewables ^{lix}.
- 83% of 18-34 year olds are concerned with climate change, compared to 67% of people aged 55 or older.
- Four in five young people aged 14-23 feel somewhat anxious or very anxious about climate change, with two in five experiencing anxiety on a weekly basis. ^{lx}
- Over 20% of young people are planning to have fewer or no children in the future because of concerns over climate change. ^{lxi}
- In our consultations young people have told us that ensuring housing is climate ready and energy efficient is a key factor in their future decisions around buying a home.

Current and future generations of young people will live with the consequences of inaction of current leaders and will suffer from increasingly worsening future outcomes. Young people experiencing poverty and inequality are especially disproportionately affected by the damage caused by climate change, due to their inability to afford adequate protections to increasingly common extreme weather events.

This is despite having little contribution to the problem. Climate change related disasters can cause long term mental health costs, including psychological trauma and mental illness, furthering the harm for vulnerable young people ^{lxiii}. Community Sector Organisations are also highly vulnerable and not well prepared to respond to climate change and as a result could suffer damage or closure, placing further strain on those they provide services to. ^{lxiv}

Ensuring your house is both energy efficient and climate ready is an incredibly expensive process, for young people living on Newstart this would be almost impossible, further exposing them to the effects of climate change. Young people are most likely to be renting rather than owning their own home, and this makes it especially difficult for them to be able to adapt their place of residence to the effects of climate change. Heat waves are the single most deadly climate change related natural disaster in Australia, with ^{xcviii} more people killed than any other natural hazard over the past 200 years. Vulnerable low-income households living in poor quality housing have limited capacity to reduce their exposure to extreme heat and 88% of Australians are reluctant to use their air conditioning due to electricity cost, further exposing them to harm ^{lxv}.

Despite containing only 11% of the Australian population, Western Australia contributes to 16% of total national emissions and from 2005-2017, the

state saw a 23.4% increase in annual emissions, the only state to increase its emissions during this period^{lxvi}. We have a responsibility as a state to do more to tackle climate change, in order to create a liveable future for young people and future generations.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Drastically reverse current trends in emissions by setting a target of 100% renewable energy in Western Australia by 2030.
- Ensure all houses built under the upcoming *Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2030* are energy efficient and able to withstand increases in extreme weather due to climate change e.g. heatwaves.

EXPENDITURE

Fund the development of specific resources to assist mental health services, school, families and other services to support young people to deal with climate anxiety.

Finance the development of a fund that supports vulnerable low-income young people and families to transition to renewable energy.

Host a Youth Climate Forum where young people can have a say in the direction of Western Australia's climate action.

Fixing gaps in Western Australia's Youth Mental Health System

WHAT WE KNOW

Mental health is an issue that is of critical concern for young people in Australia. For the first time in its 16-year history, Mission Australia's 2018 Annual Youth Survey found mental health was the number one issue of concern across all Australian States and Territories. In Western Australia rates of youth psychological distress are the second highest in the country (33% compared to 35% in Victoria)^{lxviii}, and a quarter of all attendances to emergency department for mental health issues are made by young people^{lxix}.

Despite this fact, little progress or attention has been made by the state government to invest the resources needed to address the issues that the youth mental health system currently faces. The last budget announced no new funding for youth mental health services and nothing has been done to suggest this is a priority for the State Government.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

The youth mental health system has generally been characterised by poor system design and fragmentation between Commonwealth and state funded services^{lxx}. The WA Association for Mental Health's *Youth Services Integration Project* mapped the journey through the system for 25 young people and these young people, their families, carers and service providers consistently reported that mental health services are fragmented, confusing and incredibly difficult to navigate, until they reach a preventable crisis point.

Fragmentation of funding and differing priorities of Federal and State Government is a key barrier to better service collaboration and integration. Rather than using a rights based, person-centred approach, services are often driven by the preferences and requirements of the funder, meaning that the person must fit into the service structure rather than receiving tailored support and as such services are also hindered in their ability to overlap and fill gaps for young people transitioning between services^{lxxi}.

Certain cohorts also experience a gap in mental health service delivery, these are:

- **Young People from refugee and migrant backgrounds:** Despite being the most culturally diverse state in Australia, a significant gap exists in providing specialised services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. No current specialist state-wide service currently exists, meaning individual community organisations attempt to fill this significant gap in service delivery. In 2018 the Mental Health Commission's Multicultural Mental Health Sub-Network recommended the development of a Transcultural Mental Health Service which would collaborate with existing services to deliver culturally appropriate mental health support with dedicated multi-lingual translators^{lxxii}. Despite being a recommendation in the *Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025*, plans for this service have not been developed, and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds continue to be an extremely vulnerable cohort who cannot adequately access the support they need^{lxxiii}.

- **Young People with Disabilities:** The continued rollout of the NDIS in relation to mental health services is still not fully understood. Neurodevelopmental disorders are often not recognised or are misdiagnosed in terms of underlying co-morbidity with other mental health issues, and this can complicate mental health intervention. As a result a lack of effective access to specialist assessment for someone with a chronic mental illness and/or a co-morbid neurodevelopmental disorder can hamper access to financial benefits for treatment under the National Disability Insurance Scheme ^{lxxiv}. The intersection between disability and mental health is well-known, however the practical implications for how the NDIS can be utilised to receive financial support to access to mental health services must be explored and clarified further by the State Government.
- **Young People living in Regional WA:** Young people in regional and remote areas are highly vulnerable to mental health issues; the rate of suicide for regional young people is almost three times the rate for those living in major cities; regional young men aged 15-29 in particular are almost twice as likely to die by suicide ^{lxxv} and three out of four young people experiencing a diagnosable mental illness do not access professional mental health care ^{lxxvi}. These young people experience a number of unique and significant barriers which means that their access to mental health services may be limited. Research from the Commissioner for Children and Young People found that there is an acute shortage of mental health services and programs in regional and remote communities for children and young people, in particular early intervention/ treatment for those who have a mental illness ^{lxxvii}. Other factors that influence this gap in service delivery also include community stigma and shame, distance, cost and a lack of cultural competency. Utilising online platforms to make services more available could address some of the current issues young people face, however this must be complemented by increases and improvements to service delivery on the ground ^{lxxviii}.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Initiate a collaborative process that maps the entire youth mental health system in Western Australia including services funded by both the State and Federal Government and evaluates current priorities and need.
- Co-design a dedicated Youth Mental Health Strategy that:
 - Redesigns the system to ensure distribution of funding to meet the diverse needs of young people
 - Aligns with ongoing work under the State-wide Youth Strategy and Action Plan for At-Risk Youth currently in development;
- Supports findings of the *Youth Services Integration Project* championed by the WA Association for Mental Health, with particular focus on improving service accessibility and navigation; and
- Be accompanied by robust prevention investment for populations of young people at increased risk of mental illness and suicide.
- Clarify the alignment between mental health and disability services under the NDIS and provide a clear and streamlined framework on how young people with chronic mental illnesses can access mental health services and support with financial assistance from the NDIS.

EXPENDITURE

Develop a statewide Transcultural Mental Health Service that can provide specialist support and translation services for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and their families.

Evaluate the current state of mental health services in rural and remote areas of Western Australia and support organisations to integrate online platforms to reduce service gaps.



four.

PRIORITY AREA FOUR:

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Strengthening collaboration to optimise education and employment outcomes for young people

WHAT WE KNOW

The education system in Western Australia is currently not fully equipped to meet the needs of all young people in our state. In our consultations young people and youth workers noted that the current education system is generally 'one-size-fits-all', with young people expected to adapt to the rigid structures, inflexible learning styles and expectations around standardised testing of our schooling systems and very little focus is given to alternative education models for young people who do not fit into existing structures.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Whilst we have seen welcome investments in education over the last few years, including new primary and secondary schools, regional infrastructure and STEM opportunities for students, we have seen cuts to many vital services supporting vulnerable young people as well as policies that negatively impact on the educational support of those who may be experiencing disengagement from the schooling system;

- In 2017, the State Government abolished a significant number of administrative and frontline Aboriginal Education positions in regional offices state-wide. These positions provided targeted and locally-relevant support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, their families, and schools ^{lxxxix}. This is despite the fact that 63.5% of Aboriginal students across the public education system were identified by the Department of Education as at a level of attendance risk ^{lxxx}.
- Banksia Hill Detention Centre's education services have been inadequate for a number of years as they are low-quality and young people in detention may not always have access to them, despite how critical education is to rehabilitation.

^{lxxxi}

- A new mandatory expulsion policy for violence in schools has come into effect which runs the risk of disrupting student learning, inhibiting success and further alienating disengaged young people from the school system ^{lxxxii}.

Last year we recommended that the Government further trial the Big Picture Education model into schools in order to provide alternative inclusive education models that have shown evidence of success in engaging marginalised young people compared to traditional schooling models.^{lxxxiii} Complementary to this idea, there is also a need for greater integration and partnership of youth services and schools. The 'Community School' model is a place-based educational improvement strategy where schools partner with services to provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement. Studies have shown promising evidence that the services can play an integral role in identifying and supporting young people who are at risk of not attaining an education ^{lxxxiv}. The Community Schools model can contribute to school improvement and close the gap in educational disadvantage for students in low socio-economic areas.

There is also a clear potential for the concept of youth service integration with 'mainstream' services to translate to the employment space. Often employment providers and job support services are siloed from traditional services in areas such as mental health and homelessness, despite there being a clear role for them to play in supporting young people to be able to find employment ^{lxxxv}. The sector has told us that there are a clear appetite to collaborate with existing employment services to collaboratively support a young person to find employment, however many expressed they did not know what best practice in this regard might look like in order to optimise outcomes. They felt that a clear

guiding framework on effective partnerships, data sharing, and models of service would be beneficial to support an interlinked approach.

There is often an eagerness for partnerships between schools, youth services and employment providers and these occur ad-hoc, however a lack of resources and a governance framework are often significant barriers for these partnerships to be successful. If a cooperative approach is adequately resourced and supported to enable strong long-term sustainable relationships, the collective capacity to respond flexibly and share resources to improve educational and employment outcomes for young people will be maximised ^{lxxxvi}.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Department of Education to develop a strategic framework to facilitate better partnerships between youth services and schools, provide broad principles of collaboration and improve early identification and intervention responses to support at-risk young people.
- Department of Education to review current expulsion policies for public schools to explore alternate methods of intervention.
- Department of Education to develop a strategic plan for education services at Banksia Hill and transfer all responsibility of education services at the centre to the Department of Education.
- Department of Education to conduct a review of the current Western Australian Curriculum to ensure teaching, assessment and evaluation methods are facilitating the best possible outcomes for youth education.
- Develop a clear guiding framework for youth services to meet employment outcomes and to collaborate with employment providers and services. This could include:
 - Resourcing for youth services to meet and support employment outcomes.
 - Resourcing for youth services to up skill and embed knowledge and referral pathways into employment services.
 - Requirements of service agreement deliverables and timeframes to undertake this collaboration.

EXPENDITURE

Fund further expansion of the 'Big Picture Education' school model to at least two new schools by 2020 in areas of low-socioeconomic status and high levels of disengagement.

Facilitate a trial of a place-based community partnership between services and schools in identified regional and/or remote areas where students experience significant educational disadvantage. This should include resourcing services to provide counselling, case management and group work in schools and to provide training to teachers on trauma informed practice and cultural competence.

Modernising Relationships and Sexuality Education

WHAT WE KNOW

Many young people are consistently calling for a revitalisation in the way that the Western Australian schooling system teaches Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). The findings from the 2018 *National Survey of Secondary Students and Sexual Health* showed that young people want RSE that is engaging and affirming, delivered more often, and covering a wide range of age-appropriate content provided by well-trained teachers or other professionals who are comfortable with the topic. Many respondents to the survey noted that the current RSE curriculum does not adequately cover sexual health and related topics in a non-judgemental, affirming manner ^{lxxxvii}.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Sexual education in Western Australian schools is often delivered in a way that is ad-hoc, faith-based, or reliant on the knowledge and eagerness of the teacher and/or school, with no official framework or guidelines about providing evidence based and inclusive education. Young people who identify as LGBTIQ+ may not be given adequate RSE if it is based upon a religious foundation, thus contributing to a lack of knowledge around their sexual health needs as well as feelings of exclusion. Participants in a 2012 study *Growing Up Queer: Issues Facing Young Australians Who Are Gender Variant and Sexuality Diverse* noted that sex education at school was often heteronormative and often solely focused on reproduction, therefore irrelevant to their needs. Issues of pleasure and intimacy were not addressed and information around STIs was tailored to cisgender heterosexual young people ^{lxxxviii}.

Shifting from traditional approaches to RSE that focus on reproduction to a model that is based around pleasure would encourage a more inclusive approach that reflects the diversity of sexualities, gender identities and experiences of young people. Pleasure is a key component of UNESCO's evidence informed guide to comprehensive sexuality education, incorporating a rights-based inclusive approach with broader community elements, such as condom distribution, providing training for health providers to deliver youth-friendly services, and involving parents and teachers ^{lxxxix}. Additionally young people get significant amounts of information about sexual health from peers, and so peer-led education programs can be effective in supporting schools in attempting to provide young people with the knowledge to improve their sexual health and wellbeing ^{xc}.

This approach can serve to alleviate anxiety and stigma around sex and ensure that young people have well-informed RSE in a school based setting, which is evidenced based to improve sexual health outcomes for young people and empower them to engage in healthy and responsible sexual activity ^{lxi}.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- In consultation with young people and utilising international best practice, review and reshape Western Australia's approach to RSE curriculum in a way that is human rights based, incorporative of discussions on pleasure, and inclusive of the diverse experiences of young people.

EXPENDITURE

In consultation with young people, fund the development or expansion of a peer-led education program to provide integrated sexual health education in the public-school system.

Fully fund and expand Inclusive Education WA to all public schools across Western Australia





five.

PRIORITY AREA FIVE:

YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND VOICE

ISSUE

Funding peer-led advocacy

WHAT WE KNOW

Young people are the experts in their own affairs and are often not recognised as such. Young people are currently living in a national political environment where attention to the issues facing young people is lacking; young people have no national peak body and attempts to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 federally have been rejected by a parliamentary inquiry. Despite this fact, we see young people leading the charge on advocacy over global issues such as climate change, inequality and discrimination even though those engaging in political debate, advocacy and protest are often under 18 and therefore do not have the right to vote.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Peer-led systemic advocacy groups are an important channel for young people to get involved in influencing system change on issues they are passionate about if they cannot influence them otherwise. Whilst peer-led advocacy groups cannot be wholly representative of a cohort, research has shown that service users or those with lived experience want others with the same experience as their advocates ^{xcii}. A number of peer-led systemic advocacy groups with lived experience currently operate in the state with great success. YACWA's own systemic advocates have already demonstrated significant success in influencing systemic policies and practices. For example the Youth Homelessness Advisory Council consisting of 10 young people with lived experience of homelessness were integral in developing the state's first community-led Youth Homelessness Action Plan.

The Government has shown interest in supporting youth-led advocacy through the development of the Ministerial Youth Advisory Council and must ensure that diverse cohorts are represented through their own independent peer-led advocates, who are a vital element in shaping strategic decision making and legislative reform. Without adequate funding, long term systemic advocacy is unsustainable for young people to deliver as they often act as volunteers, finding time to carry out resource intensive policy analysis in between balancing employment, education and other aspects of their lives.

Peer-led advocacy is the most effective method for young people with lived experience to be represented and for them to be able to influence governance systems in a way that those without that experience cannot. The Government must do more to ensure that young people of all backgrounds are represented and empowered to have direct say in shaping key decisions that affect them.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Develop a cross-ministerial Youth Advisory Council who are reimbursed for their time and are supported by YACWA to be able to give feedback on systems, legislation, strategies and policies that affect young people across Government.
- Facilitate an annual Youth Summit that is peer-led and captures the views and feedback of young people across the state on systemic issues that affect them.

EXPENDITURE

Provide long term funding in the forward estimates to independent systemic advocacy for young people from key vulnerable demographics, such as:

- Young people identifying as LGBTIQ+
- Young people with a disability
- Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds
- Young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
- Young people from regional Western Australia
- Young people with experience in residential care and juvenile detention
- Young women
- Young Carers

ISSUE

Allowing the voices of children and young people to be heard in order to uphold child safety across the service system

WHAT WE KNOW

In our 2019/20 Pre-Budget Submission, we noted that *“the lack of independent oversight of Western Australia’s out of home care system is grossly inadequate. Young people are exceptionally vulnerable to abuse in residential settings, so an independent advocate is essential to support young people especially in addressing issues of abuse”*^{xciii}. This is only one such example of the many gaps that currently exist in Western Australia’s systems of institutional oversight and as such the importance of this inquiry’s conclusions in this regard cannot be understated.

The Child Safe Standards proposed by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse provide an opportunity for the State to empower young people who are often denied agency and understanding. By developing a clear and robust set of standards, an opportunity presents itself to communicate these standards and rights to the young people they are intended to serve.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

There are significant gaps and overlap that currently exist in Western Australia’s oversight system of services for children and young people. Some have very different powers, scope and functions and others are less effective in holding organisations to account.^{xciv} Vulnerable children and young people often cross over multiple service systems and this means that many of them may have to access multiple oversight systems, which can be a traumatic experience in itself for those who have suffered from abuse.

There is a clear need to develop a strong, statutorily independent oversight to enforce compulsory Child Safe Standards over all institutions, both government and non-government, that care for, and provide services to young people is vital. This oversight must include robust complaint mechanisms, proactive and ongoing review of institutional adherence to Child Safe Standards and a network of individual advocates that can provide accessible support and an avenue for complaints to any young person in need.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Develop a Youth Engagement Strategy providing clear, accessible and appropriate information on the Child Safe Standards to young people so that they are aware of their rights and abilities under the Standards.

EXPENDITURE

Implement the recommendations around developing a single independent oversight body as outlined in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, including;

- Oversight of organisational facilities and compliance monitoring for the Child Safe Standards
- Systemic advocacy functions with the power to monitor laws, policies and practices that concern children and young people and provide recommendations to Parliament for reform, and;
- Investigative powers to support a network of proactive individual advocates, that provide regular visitation and complaints management to young people in institutional settings

Fund the youth sector so that they are able to have the capacity required to meet the service changes that will happen as part of adherence to new child safe standards.





PRIORITY AREA SIX:

A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE SECTOR

Strengthening shared early intervention efforts across the sector

WHAT WE KNOW

Despite consistent rhetoric from the State Government highlighting the need for, and prioritising a strategic focus on early intervention, it is consistently underfunded across the service spectrum;

- Although the *Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025* promised greater investment in prevention and early intervention services to help people stay healthy and well before needing more costly crisis-end services, minimal increases to prevention funding have occurred to meet the plan's targets of 4% prevention funding by 2020 and 5% by 2025. Since the launch of the plan, the proportion of funding for community treatment services has stayed at 43% and the proportion of funding on prevention and community support have both decreased (3% to 1% and 8% to 5% respectively) ^{xcv}.
- Family and domestic violence funding is continually funnelled towards incident response whilst prevention initiatives and early engagement and support for children and young people are overlooked ^{xcvi}.
- Western Australia spends the least on intensive and non-intensive family support services for children and young people at risk of entering care than any other state except Tasmania and the lowest proportionately than any other state or territory ^{xcvii}.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

Whilst increased funding to service delivery and crisis care is welcome and needed as demand across services continues to grow, there remains the concern that the Government is missing a critical opportunity to facilitate a long term cross-sector commitment to robust early intervention and prevention that breaks the cycle of disadvantage, reduces the burden on crisis services and prevents children and young people from entering institutionalised care.

Our consultations have consistently highlighted the need for early intervention to be prioritised. We have been told across multiple services that without adequate funding for early intervention and prevention, young people are entering into crisis-end services at higher rates, and with issues that could have been supported and managed at earlier points.

YACWA commends the recent announcement to extend the Youth Partnership Project for three more years, and we want to see more long-term funding for projects like this across the service spectrum. Evidence based long term early-intervention programs have proven effects in decreasing the demand and costs needed for acute and crisis services ^{xcviii}.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Commission research to establish the effectiveness of current early-intervention programs, where gaps currently exist, and to quantify long term savings in reducing the demand of tertiary and crisis services.

EXPENDITURE

Match funding in early intervention to meet targets set out in strategies such as the *Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025* and ensure that all strategies moving forward prioritise early intervention and prevention.

Prioritising collaborative place-based approaches to service delivery

WHAT WE KNOW

Over the last 40 years, place-based approaches to service delivery and systemic policy and planning for children and young people have been implemented across the nation. Despite mixed results due to varying factors, there is strong evidence that well-integrated place-based approaches lead to improved outcomes for children and young people if they are delivered with the right core principles as well long-term funding and strong governance ^{xcix}.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

There is a strong demand from the sector to facilitate robust place based partnerships in communities in Western Australia. Evidence from around Australia has shown a number of successful case studies of place-based models that can be used as a barometer for best practice. Communities for Children (CfC) is one such place-based approach that is underpinned by a robust-evidence base informing its approach. CfC is a federally funded initiative designed to enhance the development of children in 45 disadvantaged community sites around Australia. The initiative aims to improve coordination of services for children 0–12 years old and their families, facilitate service improvement to meet unmet need, build community capacity to engage in service delivery as well as general improvement of community outcomes in the area ^c.

Ongoing evaluations of the program have shown that CfC sites demonstrate increased service delivery, improved service coordination and collaboration, and enhanced broader community wellbeing — regardless of whether children and families received services under the program ^{ci}.

CfC was successful in part of its adaption of a number of strong core principles, which were facilitated a whole of community approach that took into account the unique and varied needs of young

people. Some examples of these principles include:

- **Assets-Based** – Community strategic plans are based upon Assets-Based Community Development, recognising community strengths and existing assets.
- **Local-level management & procurement** – The expertise held by local communities, and their understanding of local needs, relationships and landscapes, is prioritised and supported by a non-profit facilitating partner.
- **Co-design & collaboration** – Collaboration and diversity underpin all elements of the program, informing strategic planning and service procurement.
- **Evidence-based outcomes** – Decisions are underpinned by clear evidence and research to support clear targets and outcomes for impact and procurement is linked to defined community outcomes.
- **High-impact** – Sites for implementation are determined by the potential for intervention to support significant change ^{cii}.

Given the strong interest from the sector we believe this is a optimal time for the State Government to partner with local community organisations to deliver a trial place-based community partnership initiative in Western Australia. This can take best-practice learning from the CfC model and translate them in a project that can significantly young people in the community.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Undertake a review process of current place-based initiatives for young people in Western Australia to determine community need.

EXPENDITURE

Based on the CfC model, implement a trial place-based model in select regional or metropolitan communities that deliver place-based solutions to local community issues and improves service capacity and community cohesion in order to improve youth outcomes.

Supporting sustainable service delivery under the equal remuneration order

WHAT WE KNOW

The 2012 Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) was issued by the Fair Work Commission requiring community services to provide pay increases to their staff under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Award (SCHADS) 2010. Whilst the aims of this were generally supported by YACWA and the Sector, a key failing of this order was that extra funding was not provided to services to meet this increase in wages. In response to this many organisations have reported that they are likely to have to reduce the output, quality of services or have to stop providing them altogether ^{ciii}.

WHAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT

In June 2019 in response to ongoing advocacy by the Community Services Sector, the State Government agreed to provide ERO Supplementation totalling up to \$1.9 million to key 24/7 specialist homelessness services covered under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement due to these services being identified as a priority group through commissioned research and consultation with the sector ^{civ}. Whilst we welcome this much needed announcement there been no other commitment to match this process across the service spectrum. We know that the ERO has significant negative impacts for many services, and has forced essential components of service delivery that are not core funded to be would back or discontinued, therefore impacting on both the livelihood of staff and outcomes for service users ^{cv}.

It is the responsibility of the State Government to ensure that dictated increases to salaries are matched by increased funding to services. There is a plethora of evidence and feedback from services which shows that funding is at an inadequate level to meet service delivery and therefore the limited communication by the State Government about the rationale behind its lack of action in response to sector concerns is problematic. This funding is critical to ensure that the good intentions of the ERO do not translate into a severe impact on the health and wellbeing of service users and overall public health.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

STRATEGIC

- Revise the Non-Government Human Service Sector Indexation Policy, ensuring the wage growth and costs of service provision are more accurately aligned to government funding.

EXPENDITURE

Ensure the cost of the ERO wage obligations are met in State Government contracting and budget forward estimates on top of announced increases to homelessness services, so that existing service delivery levels of community services can be maintained across the sector.

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Sustainable Solutions for a Positive Future

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