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Q1

How you can use my information

Yes, you can publish my completed survey with organisation name on the website (contact details will be removed)

Q2

My contact details

Organisation (Organisation name will appear on the Assembly website unless you request confidentiality.):

Youth Coalition of the ACT

Name (Individual names and contact details will not be published.):

Phone number:

Email address:

Postal address:

Q3

Please provide a brief overview of your organisation/group and its purpose.

The Youth Coalition of the ACT is the peak body for young people aged 12-25 in the ACT, and those who work with them. We undertake policy analysis, sector development, advocacy, research and projects that respond to current issues.

Q4

Did you provide a pre-Budget submission to the ACT Government?

Yes (go to question 5)

Q5

Do you think that the issues raised in your pre-Budget submission have been addressed in the Budget?

Yes

Q6

Has your organisation/group developed a written analysis of the ACT Budget that you would like to submit?

Yes (please email it to the Economy, Gender and Economic Equality Committee)

Q7

Please list your top three priority areas for the 2021-2022 ACT Budget, in order of importance.

Priority 1	Preventing children and young people from becoming homeless
Priority 2	Responding to the mental health needs of young people
Priority 3	Enhancing and expanding support within ACT public schools

Q8

Please outline your views of the 2021-2022 ACT Budget in relation to your top three priority areas

Priority 1

The ACT Government will provide \$7 million over four years for the Safe and Connected Youth: Coordinated Service Response Program. This Program will support children and young people aged 8-15 at risk of homelessness, and their families, with a suite of services, including family support, mediation and outreach. It will also respond to the critical gap in accommodation services for children and young people in this age group, by establishing a therapeutic respite accommodation service. This is an historic and welcome investment of new funding towards preventing youth homelessness by providing early support to children, young people and their families. The support and accommodation gaps for young people under the age of 16 has been raised as an ongoing concern by the ACT youth and homelessness sectors for 20 years. This new funding will support children and young people to reduce their risk of homelessness, involvement with statutory child protection or youth justice systems, and disengagement from education. It will support families to improve parenting skills and strengthen family functioning, and to keep children and young people safe and well. By providing early support to families, the Safe and Connected Youth Program is also a necessary first step towards supporting the ACT to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) from 10 to 14; and begins to address the gap in support services for children and young people in the 'middle years'. We note that the ACT Government has also committed \$795,000 over the next two years to support the development of reforms associated with MACR. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership to ensure that appropriate supports are in place to prevent children and young people from coming into contact with the justice system and to support improved outcomes.

Priority 2

Our greatest concern and challenge going forward is youth mental health. As described in the ACT Budget, mental health for children and young people in the ACT is an ongoing concern, exacerbated by the current and future impact of the COVID-19 crisis. We welcome the funding provided through the COVID-19 Response Mental Health Support Package, and additional funding initiatives, including to deliver the digital Orygen MOST Platform, and funding for Youth & Wellbeing, a community-based youth mental health outreach service. Orygen MOST (Moderated Online Social Therapy) is an evidence-based digital platform for young people aged 12-25, which provides a personalised therapy journey with activities and tools. It is intended to be integrated with face-to-face services. In Victoria, young people are eligible to use the MOST platform if they are accessing headspace or specialist youth mental health services, as a tool to use alongside their service engagement. It will be necessary for the ACT Government to consider how the MOST platform will be most effectively implemented in the ACT, to ensure that young people accessing clinical community-based services other than headspace and CAMHS will also be eligible to access the platform. Furthermore, we note that the soon to be launched ACT child and youth mental health navigation portal is intended to provide support to children and young people who are on waiting lists to access local clinical services. These young people may also benefit from being supported to access the MOST platform. In our budget response we also provide information regarding the need to support parents of children and young people with mental health issues, and to understand and respond to the needs of young people aged 16-25.

Priority 3

We welcome the range of expanded support that will be delivered within ACT public schools, with the focus on supporting equitable access to and engagement with education. The continuation of programs to deliver legal services to college students and provide access to Chromebooks for secondary students, with free internet access for those who require it, are positive initiatives. The ACT Budget will also provide grants to disadvantaged families to assist them to meet their educational expenses, and conduct a trial within five schools to provide breakfast and lunch to students three days a week. Establishing additional youth workers, social workers, and learning professionals / support staff positions will provide valuable in-school supports for children and young people. Funding will also establish a new central team that will provide professional support, as well as assist with the recruitment and coordination of the new youth and social workers. This is a positive step towards ensuring that these workers can achieve positive outcomes for students in schools, and provides an opportunity to support school-based welfare staff to build relationships and partnerships with community-based practitioners and services. We would welcome the opportunity to support the Education Directorate in further developing this initiative.

Q9

Are there any other issues related to the 2021-2022 ACT Budget that you would like to bring to the committee's attention?

Yes. Please provide your comment.:

Further information is provided in our Budget response.
