

6 April 2016

Mrs Nicola Kosseck
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

By email: committees@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Mrs Kosseck,

Re: Letter of Support for the Youth Coalition's Submission to the Inquiry on Youth Suicide and Self-Harm in the ACT

We write to express our support for the Youth Coalition's (the Coalition) Submission to the Inquiry on Youth Suicide and Self-Harm in the ACT.

As the peak body for the community-managed mental health sector in the ACT, we also take this opportunity to stress a number of key points raised in the Coalition's Submission:

1. Young people, youth workers, and services in the ACT consistently report that mental health is one of the top three issues for young people in the ACT; 25% of young people experience a mental health issue in any given year—interventions for young people must address their mental health.
2. Early diagnosis of potentially serious psychiatric disorders in young people is essential in order to inform the choice of treatment and to predict outcome or prognosis—interventions for young people must be early and promote early diagnoses and prevention as key for realising better outcomes for young people.
3. Long wait times for youth mental health services in the ACT are a significant barrier to early help-seeking—interventions for young people must promote early help-seeking.
4. For young people, the social determinants of health have significant consequences for their life trajectories; the most disadvantaged young people are those that (a) have disabilities, (b) are Indigenous, (c) live in remote locations, (d) are carers, (e) are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and (f) are materially disadvantaged—interventions for young people must address the social determinants of health.
5. There is a gap in the sector's understanding of the unique factors that drive self-harm and suicidal ideation among young people in the ACT—more research and data are needed; interventions for young people must be evidence-based.

The ACT and Commonwealth Governments have significant roles in and responsibilities for curbing the alarming rates of suicides and self-harm among young people. There are gaps in ACT Government-funded service provision that must be filled in order to ensure that every young person in the ACT gets the help that they need – and early.

Yours faithfully,



Executive Officer

Peak body for community mental health services in the ACT