

The central issue concerning viability for the youth sector is high worker attrition and burn out due to the nature of work and employment conditions in the sector, this has been highlighted as a key priority area for both the Youth Coalition and ACTCOSS. Further, the Youth Sector generally lacks appropriate levels of funding to provide ongoing training and professional development.

According to ACOSS,¹ 54% of community organisations in the ACT have difficulty attracting appropriate staff due to levels of pay and availability of paid hours. Turnover in ACT community agencies is 30.7%, compared to the national average of 16.3%.²

Youth workers face many systemic and organisational barriers, including being overworked, underpaid, under-resourced, under-valued, having limited supervision and limited access to professional development opportunities. In addition to this the youth sector continues to face increased and more complex client loads as well as insufficient funding for training, recruitment and retention of workers within the sector.

There are also limited career pathways in the youth sector with few opportunities to advance in positions of direct service provision, forcing many front line workers both into management positions and out of the sector, considerably undermining the corporate knowledge of the sector. As such, the youth sector in particular continues to experience pressure in recruiting and retaining fully qualified and/or trained workers. This in part is due to competition with ACT and Federal Government sectors that are able to provide greater professional development opportunities, better working conditions, better opportunities for advancement and higher wages.

Minimal resources also limit organisations and individual workers access to training and professional development. ACTCOSS³ has identified that the commitment in the ACT community sector to engage in professional development is becoming increasingly difficult to translate into outcomes and improved service delivery due to the lack of available resources. In evaluation data and feedback received during the Alcohol and Other Drugs⁴ and Drugs in the Family Projects⁵ the majority of workers noted the need and their interest in increased training and no workers said that they did not need further training. This highlights workers' desires to participate in further training and professional development opportunities.

These issues are of vital importance to the youth sector and given the increased outsourcing by government to the community sector, they are important issues that governments need to address for the Youth Sector to continue to develop to become part of a cohesive and viable community sector in the ACT.⁶

¹ Australian Council of Social Service (2005) *Australian Community Sector Survey* p22

² Community Sector Taskforce (2006) *Towards a Sustainable Community Services Sector in the ACT* p19

³ ACT Council of Social Service (2003) *Sector Viability in the ACT Issues Paper*

⁴ Youth Coalition of the ACT (2005) *Alcohol and Other Drugs Project and Evaluation Report*.

⁵ Youth Coalition of the ACT (2006) *Drugs in the Family Evaluation Report*.

⁶ Ibid

The Youth Coalition is committed to:

- ◆ Advocating for adequate funding to ensure the youth sector remains viable and its services and outcomes for young people are sustainable into the future
 - ◆ Advocating for a workforce development framework to be adopted across the Youth Sector to ensure a viable sector.
 - ◆ Advocating for government to adequately fund training and professional development for those who work with young people in order to both retain workers and increased the quality of service delivered by the youth sector.
 - ◆ Advocate for the implementation of the recommendations included in the Community Sector Taskforce Report – particularly for improved wages and conditions.
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