

Youth Housing and Homelessness Forum Minutes

Date: April 6th 2023

Time: 9:30-11:30am

Location: In person & online

Attendance

Thomas Stevens - The Youth Coalition of the ACT
Erin Barry - The Youth Coalition of the ACT
Justin Ingram - Salvation Army - Oasis
Amy Shipway - Salvation Army - Oasis
Dan White - Conflict Resolution Service
Anne Kent - Conflict Resolution Service
Amani Kerr - Conflict Resolution Service
Stacey Bright - Woden Community Services - Raw Potential
Lilly Mende - Woden Community Services - Raw Potential
Nicole Townsend - Canberra Youth Residential Service
Andrew Rich - Canberra Youth Residential Service
Winnie Thaug - Canberra Youth Residential Service
Siobhan Cosgrave - Barnardos
Heidii Burgess - Communities at Work
Alicia Twohill - ACT Education
Bryan Duke - Ted Noffs - Take Hold Program
Kelly McGrath - Housing ACT
Nicolee Clisdell - Housing ACT
Lucy Roberts - Karinya House

Agenda Items

1. Acknowledgement of Country

Thomas opened the meeting by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people as the traditional owners and continuing custodians of the lands of the ACT, and paid respect to the past, present and future Elders, families and ancestors.

2. Service Update

a. Dan White (Conflict Resolution Service)

- i. We have two main arms, our Family Support Program and Safe and Connected Youth (SACY)
- ii. The programs are catered to young people experiencing family conflict and may be at risk of homelessness. Our aim is to prevent youth

homelessness and to intervene before a young people becomes homeless.

- iii. Our Family Support Program works with 16 – 25 year olds alongside their whole family.
- iv. SACY works with 8 – 16 year olds and includes Ruby's House. The purpose of the Ruby's house is to spend some time at Ruby's house and some time at home to get an idea of what a positive home life would look like and function. The function of Ruby's house is not respite or emergency accommodation.
- v. Parents need to be involved and are connecting with counselling so both the young person and parents are receiving support.
- vi. Referrals can come through the CRS website or give us a call.

b. Stacey Bright (RAW Potential)

- i. Part of the RAW potential team within Woden Community that provides case management for 12-25 year olds
- ii. We focus on connecting young people with services to provide support
- iii. They have training opportunities this and a successful dentist rescue program.

c. Nicole Townsend (CYRS)

- i. Part of a partnership that runs the YEAN, a 7-day crisis support service with 24 beds across Canberra and 3 transitional houses for 16 – 25 year olds.
- ii. We hope to have young people transition in and out of our services depending on their needs but there aren't many option in terms of accommodation moving forward.
- iii. We've been having issues with filling vacancies over the last few months. They have been filling really slowly from the referrals through Onelink.
- iv. We've found it particularly difficult to fill male vacancies, but when we asked the young person they said they registered with Onelink a few months ago.
- v. We also had a young person referred to us in Belconnen but he goes to Lake Tuggeranong College even though we've had vacancies south side.

b. Siobhan Cosgrove (Barnados)

- i. Barnados YHS and oversees 3 homelessness programs: Our Place for 16-25 year olds, Friendly Landlord with 30 properties across Canberra, and YIASP (Couch Surfing Program) for supported accommodation with a family or friend, which includes financial support
- ii. We have vacancies come up recently after a long time
- iii. We've seen young people exit into a mixture of private rental and social and community housing. Private rental seems to be inaccessible to young people.
- iv. We have a Youth Homelessness Matters Day event coming up on the 19th of April at Our Place in Braddon from 4:30pm. Most of it has been organised by young people who will speak about their experiences of homelessness. Travis Gilbert from ACT Shelter will also be speaking. There will also be food, music and art.

c. Andrew Rich (Oasis Youth Services)

- i. Part of a partnership that runs the YEAN, a 7-day crisis support service with 24 beds across Canberra and 3 transitional houses.
- ii. Struggling to get male vacancies. We've had a vacancy for over 4 weeks.
- iii. We've also seen referrals with really old information.
- iv. We also offer transitional housing through the YEANTA and just put on a case manager for 2 days a week
- v. We are also working to bring online an additional 28 units of accommodation over the next 12 months. We are doing work to refurbish a complex. This would be a combination transitional and long term accommodation.
- vi. We are currently advertising for a Psychologist to work with YEAN and community clients but struggling to find one. We are considering hiring a counsellor instead.

d. Lucy Roberts (Karinya House)

- i. We work with and support women who are pregnant or parenting.
- ii. We have supported and semi-independent accommodation where we saw an influx before Christmas. Since we've seen some movement.
- iii. We have a waiting list but are still taking referrals.

e. Bryan Duke (Ted Noffs – Take Hold Program)

- i. We provide youth homelessness support for 16-25 year olds. We support young people to navigate the youth homelessness sector, from sleeping rough, doing referrals, to getting accommodation.
- ii. Our mentoring program has been suspended since COVID.
- iii. Been at capacity since December.

f. Kelly McGrath (ACT Housing)

- i. From the Youth Homelessness Services team at ACT Housing.
- ii. Today is my last day acting as an Assistant Director. Kim Williamson will be taking over and I'll be moving back to being a relationship manager.

g. Nicolee Clisdell (ACT Housing)

- i. I have passed on the feedback from Justin at our last meeting in relation to delays with young people's applications being assessed for priority.
- ii. I'm hoping to get someone from the Youth team to attend meetings so we can ask questions and flag things related to applications and allocations. We've had them involved in the past but want to re-engage them.
- iii. Nicole Townsend provided feedback to ACT Housing about necessary documentation when doing an assessment for high needs. She's finding that when young people are doing the assessment and they indicate they have anxiety and or depression, housing sends a letter back indicating that they have 28 days to provide additional documentation. She's had clarification that the additional documentation isn't needed to get the young person on high needs and is more a suggestion. She's hoping that this is clarifying within housing.

2. Youth Co Update – Thomas Stevens and Erin Barry

- a. Our latest sector bulletin can be found here: [The Youth Coalition of the ACT \(campaign-archive.com\)](https://campaign-archive.com)
- b. To stay up to date with what we are doing subscribe to our sector bulletin here: <https://www.youthcoalition.net/>
- c. **ACT Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice**
We recently launched the Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice. It provides a provides a framework for safe, ethical, and professional youth work practice. The Code has been developed for, by and with the ACT Youth Sector. It revises and builds upon the previous work done by the sector over 15 years ago. It can be found online here: <https://www.youthcoalition.net/ethics/>
- d. **Minimum age of criminal responsibility**
The ACT Government will move a single Bill to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12, and then to 14 years within the 2 years. The transition period allows the government and community sector to ensure the necessary range of social support services exist to support children who might otherwise enter the criminal justice system.
- e. **Budget Submission**
Within our budget submission this year we will be asking for funding for a new housing model that accommodates young people who have complex needs and aren't engaged in education, employment or training. We would be looking to work with the YHHF to get input over the next 12 months to see how that would look.
- f. **Youth Homelessness Matters Day is Wednesday 19 April 2023**
YFoundation is coordinating this years campaign, and the main part of the campaign is a petition calling on the federal government to commit to a standalone child and youth homelessness plan. As part of it they have outlined several principles and understandings that accounts for meaningful, inclusive and best practice design. Sign the petition [here](#)
- g. **Events**
 - Our Place Youth Foyer YHMD Event**
Barnados Canberra has organised an event at Our Place to highlight the issue of youth homelessness in the ACT and nationally, as well as celebrate the 10th birthday of Our Place in Braddon.
April 19th at 4:30pm at Our Place in Braddon I encourage you all to get along.
 - ATODA Training - Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Information and Harm Reduction Training for Youth Workers**
The training will seek to provide participants with use and trends harm reduction strategies, improved confidence and new skills in harm reduction practice. There are 2 sessions in June To register for the training go to: <https://www.youthcoalition.net/events-list>
 - Reflective Supervision Training – CYFSP**
Families ACT and the Youth Coalition of the ACT have developed a reflective supervision training package specifically for local community sector services. The training begins on April 27th: 9:30am – 3:30pm
For more information and to register go to:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/reflective-supervision-training-tickets-578253430577>

3. Mental Health Forum Discussion – Erin Barry

- a. We've been working with the Office of Mental Health as well as the Capital Health Network over the last 3-4 years to strategically progress work to address the gaps in Mental Health system the ACT.
- b. In 2021/2022 we did a piece of research with them looking at the 'Missing Middle', children and young people with moderate to severe mental health issues falling through the gaps. A key finding from the report was the often young people with complex needs are often the ones missing out on getting support, this included young people at risk or experiencing homelessness.
- c. We've since been working with them to setup a new Child & Youth Mental Health Sector Network. We've been doing planning with the sector over the last 6-8 months. Through the network we are hoping to pick a few issues each year to strategically focus on.
- d. We've heard and have received feedback on the gaps in Mental Health services for young people at risk or experiencing homelessness. We are interested in whether the YHHF would be interested in collaborating with the network to progress some work within that space.
- e. There was general agreeance amongst the group that it would be something that would be very interested in progressing.
- f. The group discussed that they are often looking after young people with complex mental health issues but are not funded and have the capacity to look after them.
- g. The group discussed the difficulties and barriers to getting young people adequate support and how it's often unsafe for them as their needs aren't being addressed.
- h. The group discussed how they sometimes need to decline referrals if the young persons mental health needs are too complex as they don't have the capacity to look after them.
- i. The group discussed how a young person's mental health can deteriorate whilst waiting in crisis accommodation as there aren't many exit points.
- j. The group discussed the complexities of shared accommodation and the responsibilities placed on young people living with others who have complex mental health needs.
- k. The group discussed how emergency is often the only place to refer young people and how young people need someone to wait with them and navigate the hospital.
- l. The group discussed the difficulties on working with a young person who's been exited from hospital into their service.
- m. Erin talked about how there is funding for a new youth at risk trauma service to work with young people with comorbidities and complex needs. It's roughly 2 years away but we will continue to discuss with the YHHF about how it can be involved.

4. Commissioning Discussion – Thomas Stevens

- a. An action item from our last meeting was to see if someone from commissioning could attend a YHHF and present on where it is up to and address any members questions or concerns.

- b. I met with a few people from ACT Housing and they suggested that Valerie Spencer would be best placed to come and present to the group. I also provided them some general feedback from the group.
- c. The group talked about how generally speaking people's questions have been addressed since the last meeting in February, but felt it would still be advantageous to organise Valerie Spencer to come and speak to the group. As the next YHHF is in June the group felt it would be better to organise something sooner.
- d. Some members talked about how the FAQ's, Youth Listening report and other information on the website has been really helpful and answered a lot of questions they had.

Links to the website and documents can be found here:

[Homelessness and Housing - Commissioning \(act.gov.au\)](https://act.gov.au/homelessness-and-housing-commissioning)

[Youth Listening report \(act.gov.au\)](https://act.gov.au/youth-listening-report)

[Strategic Investment Plan for the Homelessness Sector \(act.gov.au\)](https://act.gov.au/strategic-investment-plan-for-the-homelessness-sector)

[Frequently-Asked-Questions-14032023.pdf \(act.gov.au\)](https://act.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-14032023.pdf)

Action Items

- i. Coordinate with Valerie Spencer to come and present to the group on commissioning within the next month.
- ii. Begin discussions with the Child & Youth Mental Health Sector Network on how they could collaborate with the YHHF.