

# Youth Housing and Homelessness Forum Minutes

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**Date:** December 1, 2023

**Time:** 9:30-11:30am

**Location:** In person & online

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## Attendance

Thomas Stevens – Youth Coalition of the ACT  
Erin Barry – Youth Coalition of the ACT  
Ciara Duggan – ACT Education Directorate  
Matthew Wilson – Ruby’s, Marymead CatholicCare  
David Wolthof – Conflict Resolution Service  
Lilly Mende – Raw Potential, WCS  
Nicky Link – Youth Engagement Team, WCS  
Andy Miles – Canberra Youth Residential Service  
Siobhan Cosgrave – Barnardos  
Renea Moriarty – Barnardos  
Oliver Daroza – ACT Education Directorate  
Dot Foley – CREATE

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## 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. Ciara (Education Directorate – Senior Youth Worker)

- i. The Senior Youth Workers are a newly formed team in 2023. They work with school youth workers across ACT schools, to support them to connect to community agencies, and develop new frameworks.

#### b. Matt (Ruby’s – Marymead CatholicCare)

- i. Ruby’s has been operating for over a year in the community, and are an early preservation service working with young people aged 8-15 at risk of homelessness, and their families.
- ii. There are six beds available. Young people can access support through part-time placements; while the service works with the whole family.

- iii. There has been an increase in referrals coming in to the Christmas period, and they are expecting to see this trend continue in 2024.
- iv. The broader program (Safe and Connected Youth) can also provide outreach, which assists them to manage wait lists.

**c. David (Manager of Family and Youth, Conflict Resolution Service)**

- i. Oversees the CRS component of the Safe and Connected Youth / Ruby's program.
- ii. CRS also provides a Family Support Program for children and young people aged 8-24, which works with families to embed strategies.
- iii. A new program has just been funded – Family Connect; a partnership between CRS and Multicultural Hub. This program supports young people aged 15-25 at risk of homelessness to sustain families and increase family connection, including connection to culture. It uses an outreach model, including therapeutic case manager and a mediator or counsellor, to provide support to address factors creating conflict in the home. A sub-component, Brief Connections, can provide brief initial support to families, prior to them having to commit to the program.
- iv. Individuals and families can be referred to specific programs, or to CRS in general, who can provide an assessment and determine which program is the most suitable.

**b. Lilly (Raw Potential, WCS)**

- i. Raw Potential provides outreach support to young people aged 15 – 25
- ii. They are currently at capacity, due to other service closures
- iii. They recently held another Raw Connection event with Synergy at Outward Bound.

**c. Nicky (Youth Engagement Team, WCS)**

- i. The YET run youth engagement programs out of Woden Youth Centre. They are currently at capacity, and will be closing the week before Christmas. They will reopen in January.

**d. Andy (Canberra Youth Residential Service)**

- i. The CYRS provides crisis youth homelessness support on the northside of the ACT. They currently have no vacancies.
- ii. This service is being wound up at the end of June 2024, in line with the commissioning timeline.

**e. Siobhan and Renea (Barnardos)**

- i. Barnardos oversees three homelessness programs: (1) Our Place for 16-25 year olds, (2) Friendly Landlord with 30 properties across Canberra, and (3) Couch Surfing Program for supported accommodation for a young person with a family or friend, which includes financial support to the family.
- ii. The Couch Surfing Program is closing, due to the commissioning process. Barnardos is still receiving referrals but no similar program has been funded. This program included young people who had self-placed with other families, including within the Aboriginal community. Four families are receiving transition support from CatholicCare over the next 12 months. The closure of this program may leave a service system

gap, as some young people do not want to access early intervention of family support programs due to family violence.

- iii. Other commissioning processes have not yet been announced and there is a high level of uncertainty.
- iv. Many young people accessing youth homelessness services are on visas and not eligible for public housing.
- v. The contract for the Our Place Youth Foyer will be up around June 2024. It is currently unclear whether the new site in Woden will impact retention of the Braddon property.

**f. Ollie (Education Directorate)**

- i. Noted the impact on students during the summer school holidays, as schools shut down and students may not be connected with other services.

**g. Dot (Create)**

- i. Provides support to young people in out-of-home care, to advocate for service system changes.
- ii. Provides support to strengthen living/life skills, such as budgeting and housing.

### **3. Youth Coalition Update – Thomas Stevens and Erin Barry**

- a. Homelessness Commissioning:** The Youth Coalition team recognised the impact of the uncertainty and changes occurring in the youth homelessness sector, including potential new service gaps, and the extra effort being undertaken by workers and services to support young people and families to transition to other programs. The Youth Coalition has raised concerns in a range of forums, including directly with senior representatives in Housing ACT and the Minister for Housing and Homelessness. The YHHF is a valued mechanism to monitor and understand the service system gaps and challenges, and will continue to be valuable moving forward into the next phase of commissioning. We appreciate the time and contribution shared by YHHF members that allows this monitoring and advocacy to occur.
- b. Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility:** The MACR has now been raised from 10 to 12, and will be further raised to 14 in 2025 to allow time for service system reforms to occur. Recruitment for the forthcoming Therapeutic Support Panel is currently underway, and a tender has already closed for a community service response (but not yet announced).
- c. ‘Talk to Them’ training:** This free, two-day training for youth workers to identify, respond and refer young people impacted by domestic and family violence was developed in partnership with Relationships Australia. 10 people participated in the Train the Trainer, and will be supported to deliver the training over the next 18 months to the broader sector. Workshops will be promoted through the Youth Coalition eBulletin.
- d. YOGIE Awards:** The annual YOGIE Awards ceremony will be held on Monday 11 December.

- e. **Annual Report:** The Youth Coalition Annual Report provides an overview of the range of activities undertaken by the Youth Coalition in 2022-23, and is available on the Youth Coalition website.
- f. **ACT Child and Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance:** The new Alliance developed by the Office for Mental Health & Wellbeing, Capital Health Network, and the Youth Coalition; has established a new working group which will undertake activities to improve service system responses for children and young people with mental health concerns, and co-occurring, complex concerns. There may be an opportunity for joined-up work to occur between the YHMF and the Alliance, once the youth homelessness sector has stabilised following current commissioning processes. Members raised a number of concerns regarding the interaction between mental health services, particularly tertiary services, and homelessness services; and suggested that consultation could be undertaken with young people in homelessness services, regarding what has and has not worked well in their engagement with the mental health system.
- g. Our latest sector bulletin can be found here: [The Youth Coalition of the ACT \(campaign-archive.com\)](https://www.youthcoalition.net/campaign-archive.com)
- h. To stay up to date with what we are doing subscribe to our sector bulletin here: <https://www.youthcoalition.net/>

#### **4. Other business:**

- a. Youth Homeless Matters Day – will be held on Wednesday 17 April. An event in Salthouse Hall in HAIG Park will be held. Contact Siobhan for more information or to get involved – [scosgrave@barnardos.org.au](mailto:scosgrave@barnardos.org.au).