

# Youth Housing and Homelessness Forum Minutes

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**Date:** February 15 2024

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

**Location:** In person & online

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## Attendance

Thomas Stevens - The Youth Coalition of the ACT  
Justin Barker - The Youth Coalition of the ACT  
Hannah Watts - Education Directorate  
Ciára Duggan - Education Directorate  
Brenton Connelly - Youth Housing Support Service  
Nicole Molyneux - Barnardos  
Peter Schwarz - Barnardos  
Renea Moriaty - Barnardos  
Siobhan Cosgrove - Barnardos  
Hele Rose - WCS  
Joel Artup - WCS  
Winnie Thaug - CYRS

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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. Hannah Watts - Education Directorate

- i. I oversee the senior youth work team who provide support to youth workers in 68 schools across Canberra.
- ii. Youth Workers are spread across primary and secondary and colleges. 30-40% of youth workers are in primary schools.
- iii. We are planning to start region-based networks this year. This is mainly for college based youth workers.
- iv. We are working to build up connections between schools and the community sector.
- v. Reach out to us if any program would like to talk to school youth workers about their program.

- vi. Organisations can contact us to ask who the school youth worker is in a particular school.

**b. Brenton Connelly – Youth Housing Support Service**

- i. We work with young people 15-25 at risk of homelessness.
- ii. We have a few new workers
- iii. Currently have roughly 60 clients spread amongst 3 case workers with 20 clients on our waitlist.
- iv. We are getting a lot of referrals
- v. As a positive, there is a \$2000 grant for people escaping domestic violence we've had great success at accessing for clients
- vi. Lack of housing is an issue
- vii. Referrals can be made here: <https://mccg.org.au/services/youth-housing-support-service/>

**c. Nicole Molyneux – Barnardos**

- i. I am overseeing the Youth homelessness matters event this year
- ii. We have setup a committee that is meeting weekly
- iii. Committee open to young people who have experienced homelessness

**d. Peter Schwarz – Barnardos**

- i. I previously ran the couch surfing program. We are waiting to see how commissioning goes. We've had 6-8 calls from schools but have to say sorry as the program is no longer available.
- ii. Justin: After commissioning is done, I feel there will be a gap that will need to be filled. Given that there is a housing shortage, the program is an excellent alternative.

**e. Joel Artup – WCS**

- i. Oversee the Youth Engagement Team and RAW Potential at WCS.
- ii. RAW potential is entirely through based donations separate from mainstream funding. Currently businesses don't have much money to donate.

**f. Winnie Thaug – Canberra youth residential service**

- i. Running as normal. The service will be winding up in June. We're feeling okay about it but are trying to do the right thing and are concerned about handing over the properties and clients.

**1. Youth Co Update – Thomas Stevens and Dr Justin Barker**

- a. **'Talk to Them' training:** During the training, we will equip you with the necessary knowledge and confidence to initiate discussions about Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) with young people. This training will increase your capacity to understand, recognise and respond to DFV issues, safely refer the young person and/or family to specialist DFV services, and continue to support them as they navigate the specialist DFV support system. It was created specifically for youth workers but I would encourage anyone who works with young people to attend that training. Workshops will be promoted through the Youth Coalition eBulletin.

- b. **ACT Child and Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance:** Launched last year. The Alliance is led by Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Capital Health Network and us, with support from a Coordinating Committee of key stakeholders. The Alliance aims to provide a structured, formal mechanism for government, community stakeholders, the private sector and people with lived experience, to connect and work collaboratively towards improving mental health service system responses for children and young people. If you are interested in being part of that
- c. **Child and Young Person's Act:** There have been changes to the act recently. Bill 1 has passed with minor changes. Bill 2 is going to be passed soon. We've asked them to do a session with the community sector to explain the changes. They said they might do that after the changes have been made. It will be important for workers to understand what it means for them working with young people.
- d. Our latest sector bulletin can be found here: [The Youth Coalition of the ACT \(campaign-archive.com\)](http://campaign-archive.com)
- e. To stay up to date with what we are doing subscribe to our sector bulletin here: <https://www.youthcoalition.net/>

## Discussion

- a. Justin discussed the need to be advocating for young people on waiting lists for public housing. The amount of young people who are housed is disproportionate to the amount that are homeless. This is about equity. It's about changing intake criteria.
- b. After commissioning, we need to do a mapping of the youth homelessness sector. We need to do a gaps analysis and it needs to be mapped by the youth sector.