

Woden Community Service 2019 – 2020 Budget Submission

Mr Andrew Barr
ACT Chief Minister and Treasurer
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Barr

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission to inform the drafting of the 2019 – 2020 Budget. Woden Community Service (WCS) acknowledges the financial constraint under which the ACT Government is working and the imperative to find savings in existing programs to enable the funding of new initiatives.

While I am requesting your consideration of additional funding for a small number of service initiatives, I am also suggesting a savings proposal relating to a range of services funded by the ACT Government and delivered by the community sector.

1. Increased service integration between government statutory services and funded community sector agencies

Over the past year, the ACT Government has developed a number of initiatives, reviewed strategies and plans and introduced wide-ranging service reforms that often sit in isolation from one another or from key service stakeholders, namely the ACT community sector. ACT Government funded services delivered by the community sector are a cost effective option to government services, are locally based and able to work across issues for children, young people and families.

Three pieces of work in particular demonstrate the potential of increased service integration between government and funded community organisations, improved outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage and significant savings to government over the longer term.

The Early Support By Design, the Continuum of Education (and Future of Education) and the reviewed ACT Youth Justice Blueprint present opportunities for integrating service delivery that will provide longer-term outcomes and greater savings to government through improved coordination and less duplication of effort. Woden Community Service (WCS) has been involved in each of these initiatives and has developed a paper that responds to the work of the Youth Justice Blueprint that is in itself a blueprint for increased

integration of service through place-based partnership delivery by the community sector. The paper is attached.

The fragmentation and poor coordination of services leads to duplication of effort and inefficient use of resources particularly high cost government provided statutory services. The Human Services Directorates need to coordinate their service delivery by working together to achieve better outcomes at a more efficient cost to government and the ACT community.

An example of this is the lack of integrated service between the Community Services Directorate and the Education Directorate. Both work with children, young people and families and share the same welfare and wellbeing concerns for those client groups.

One funds the resources required to support the groups (CSD) and the other refers their students and families to statutory services when in crisis. The community sector agencies funded to deliver services to children young people and families are located in the school regions, despite the efforts of the agencies the schools are unaware of the services yet scramble to bring in any agency that addresses an immediate issue within the school community.

The community sector has promoted the Network Coordination position as the “go to” position within each region for schools and colleges to contact for resources for the school/college or for students and their families. This would provide specialist and targeted assistance to schools, support the work of their therapeutic staff with longer-term external (to the school) supports. It is also an early intervention response to emerging issues for students and their families that present at school with less than optimal consequences.

Network Coordinators would also promote OneLink as the destination for all referrals from schools for students and family support services and mandatory reporting for schools given the colocation of Child Youth Protection staff at OneLink. Currently schools are among the top three of highest mandatory reporters for child welfare concerns, which adds to a high workload in the expensive statutory service system. These reports need to be triaged to ensure that those requiring the prompt attention of CYPS staff, rather than all reports that are made, most of which do not meet the threshold for CYPS intervention.

2. Additional Community Development Funds

For the past three years, Woden Community Service's Community Development worker has been fully engaged in the Public Housing Relocation Project. This has been necessary and highly effective work as they have worked with Housing ACT, tenants and communities that are hosting the new tenants or preparing to welcome them into their suburbs. The work has also included working with those tenants who are the last to leave

due to hoarding disorders, assisting tenants to move into new accommodation in new suburbs, working with new communities to engage with the relocating tenants. This work has again reiterated the value of community development within a regional community service environment with an expanding focus on local capacity building and place based service delivery.

The Public Housing Relocation initiative demonstrated the critical role of community consultation in engaging individuals and groups around issues of possible contention, to ensure their voices are heard and that an appropriate dialogue is created and nurtured as the change process is progressed. Central to the consultation process are the community development workers who work in the middle spaced between all the contending stakeholders, building alliances and resolving conflict where possible through sharing of perspectives and understandings.

There is currently a resurgence of community development within the ACT as the value of practitioners is being realised, however there aren't many funded community development roles. While resources are focused on working with government to deliver social policy, there is significant capacity building activities that can be delivered to build resilient and engaged communities.

WCS is currently working with EPSDD on the Woden Experiment initiative in which we are being asked to take primary responsibility for the delivery of the project post implementation. Given the significant residential and commercial development currently underway in the Woden Town Centre and surrounds, any initiative that builds social amenity is critical to establishing a vibrant town centre. This has been lacking over many years and is now critically important to enable the social and economic development of the region.

Woden Experiment is a six-month furniture and landscape installation project in the Woden Town Plaza aimed to give the community of Woden a comfortable place to socialise and relax. User-centred design methodologies will ensure the outcome is driven by the community, for the community.

Capital Works (Transport Canberra and City Services) are providing the physical infrastructure installation in conjunction with Street Furniture Australia. It is recognised however, that in order for the community to have a sense of ownership and longevity of engagement following the initial six month period, the project would benefit from incorporating a Community Development framework to coordinate activities and events.

Additional resources for regionally based organisations already delivering these services would serve the communities well in creating greater self-reliance and community engagement.

3. Additional Housing Support funds

Although incorporated into the ACT Government's recently released Housing Strategy, there is a continuing need to ensure appropriate supports for people who are transitioning from homelessness to independent living. The requirements to assist people to establish and maintain a tenancy/property are critical to ensuring the transition is successful. Housing ACT will not provide a public housing tenancy if the potential tenant cannot maintain the tenancy. People transitioning from homelessness to crisis and transitional housing will require assistance to establish and maintain their tenancy if it is offered.

The role of a housing support person is to provide assistance based on the specific requirements of each individual. There are no roles currently within the specialist housing services sector, with the exception of the outreach support positions within some agencies or the training that might occur within the shelters or transition houses, to provide this assistance.

4. Hoarding Response Service

Recommendation: Provide a Hoarding Response Service that provides a single point of contact for participants and workers, participates in a multi-disciplinary response and continues research on current hoarding intervention models.

Background

Woden Community Service (WCS) has a wealth of knowledge, expertise and recognised experience in assisting and working with people who experience hoarding and squalor, through its work across tenancy support, peer support and mental health programs.

WCS auspiced several Capital Health Network funded projects which aimed at building the capacity of the Canberra Living Conditions Network (CLCN) from 2014 - 2016. These projects increased the understanding and awareness in the community of the complexity of the issue of hoarding and how it crosses across many sectors. It also developed tools to assist the sector, including developing a website with centralised information for the ACT community, specialised training modules relevant to the local legislation which are continuing to be developed and regularly presented, and hosting internationally renowned speakers for forums and workshops.

These projects also introduced the internationally successful peer support program, Buried in Treasures, a structured 20 week program, for people who want to have more room for

themselves in their homes, but just can't seem to get started. Each week peer facilitators lead discussion around a skill from the book, *Buried in Treasures* (BIT), and complete challenging and rewarding exercises. In the last four years WCS has run 10 BIT courses. In some cases, participants are reporting that they receive more value from the *Buried in Treasures* groups than they do from individual cognitive behavioural therapy sessions.

In 2018, WCS continued to support *Buried in Treasures* courses and post support group meetings to ensure *Buried in Treasures* graduates can stay engaged and maintain the skills gained through the program. There is also a growing network of peer workers and facilitators emerging from the *Buried in Treasures* program, who assist with facilitation of the groups, raising awareness through sharing their recovery through the media and training, and supporting some participants.

The CLCN activity in recent years has contributed to increasing awareness of the issues of hoarding and squalor across the ACT and a heightened expectation that there are services available to assist. Services that do work in this area, such as the Supportive Tenancy Service (STS), are at capacity and also often not specialised to be able to engage with the complexity of the issue and address the underlying causes, such as mental health issues. These gaps cause frustration for the participant, the workers and the wider community and often mean that the issues represent within a short period. WCS has researched international best practice in this field. To be able to build on this experience and expertise and to address a clear gap in service provision in the ACT, WCS proposes that the ACT Government consider approving financial support for the following Hoarding Response Service. Activities will include:

- 1. Information and referral for hoarding in the wider ACT community.** This service provides support and information to a range of stakeholders within the community: people living with the issue, families and friends, neighbours, services and government agencies, and helps to coordinate services where needed. It would provide information on how to approach working with a problem of hoarding and where to go for assistance (support services, mental health expertise and peers support groups). It would also help to coordinate responses where multiple services (government and non-government) are involved but unaware of each other. The Hoarding Case Management Group, hosted by Health Protection Service, is presently managing this inconsistency within the ACT Government services. The Hoarding Response Service would extend this to the wider community service sector, and then direct the enquiry to the best starting point.

- 2. Provide a community response service for people living with hoarding.** This would include the following:
- a. **Provide assistance to ACT Government directorates when they need to provide a regulated response to a hoarding crisis.** There is a rising need for a community organisation (community workers) to work collaboratively with the government agencies and directorates and provide a point of difference when they need to respond to a crisis situation. The community worker can attend with government services or be a liaison point between client and government, and help to refer to further supports to help address underlying issues. There are many examples of forced clean-ups only being a short term solution. We are presently working with City Services and Health Protection services with long-term crisis cases within the ACT community.
 - b. **Build a supported team of workers and volunteers.** A coordinated, trained and fully supported volunteer workforce can work in collaboration with workers to assist with cleaning out, maintaining the property and establishing supportive routines over time through providing regular and consistent assistance and guidance. WCS is already establishing a specialised taskforce of volunteers and workers in this area, developing training and building a peer support network to ensure positive results.
 - c. **Collaborate with and assist existing services across Canberra.** Many services in Canberra are already overwhelmed with people/ properties connected to the issue of hoarding. WCS is involved in the current process of public housing relocation across Canberra and has shown that there is a clear role for a supportive hoarding response service. We are committed to ensuring a coordinated community response that works alongside and engages with participants outside the government role.

WCS provides trained workers and volunteers to assist tenants involved in the relocations and support them before, during and after their move. WCS has a long working relationship with Supportive Tenancy Service, Housing ACT, Health Protection Service and the Hoarding Case Management Group, and many other community services working in the area and will continue to foster these relationships to the benefit of all concerned.

Chris Redmond
CEO
Woden Community Service
31 October 2018

ACT Youth Justice Blueprint Service Concept

The Mentally Friendly report into early adolescence at risk of offending and intergenerational transmission of criminal offending, provides, through its key findings, an opportunity to reconsider the service approach to respond to these vulnerable children.

The first five years of the ACT Youth Justice Blueprint focusses on increased service integration and the key findings of the Mentally Friendly report reiterates the benefits of such an approach. However, many of the findings overlap with themes of categorising and defining responsibilities across agencies, and sharing responsibilities across the services sector – both government and community – in such a way that it is not fragmented, not duplicated and considers holistically the individual and associated issues.

There are many benefits to be derived from complementing the statutory work done by ACT Government services and the non-statutory work that can be undertaken by community organisations. This is particularly evident in the work provided by ACT Government funded (through the CYFS program) community organisations that are regionally based.

Services provided would improve outcomes through a more targeted approach that combines the Directorate's statutory work with the complementary services provided by community organisations to children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability. The Blueprint provides this opportunity, including specifying the work of those funded services to support the Directorate in meeting the Blueprint's goals through the existing service contracts.

Funded services are provided for youth engagement and family support. While the services receive referrals from a range of sources, it is imperative that the service system is aligned to ensure that the "most vulnerable" can access the services. Referrals must be seen as coordinated and streamlined across Government Directorates and community sector organisations. A single source of referral, such as OneLink, could assist this or through the Network Coordination position for each region.

Currently work is being undertaken by the Human Services Cluster focusing on early intervention. The Education and Training Directorate is also undertaking work focusing on Off Campus Education. Both are relevant to the Blueprint's work, particularly in aligning the service system to work together. These current bodies of work don't appear to share common interest and responsibilities, and focus on delivering service systems in isolation of other players in community service space.

An example of this is the two “community based child and youth protection workers” jointly employed by OneLink (Woden Community Service) and CYPS – this has seen the colocation of CYPS workers within a community agency to divert families from the statutory service system into funded, locally based community services.

CYPS have also engaged other community and directorate staff to build service linkages between the service systems. Such an approach provides a foundation for testing other service approaches aimed at integrating the different stakeholders in the service system around people experiencing high levels of vulnerability.

This approach has the following benefits:

1. It supports a shared understanding of the developmental stages of adolescence required to inform intervention through joint training. By developing a shared understanding of the points of intersection of the service systems, points of referral to more appropriate/relevant services and ways of sharing the monitoring of service continuation there can be a more efficient use of resources across both systems.
2. Shared understanding of the importance of early intervention and the principles and practices underpinning it. This is essential across both statutory or government services and funded community services to develop and deliver timely place based, not a statutory service, response. For example, the Education system has struggled to effectively engage services outside the school setting to support children and families as they don't know what services are available or how to access them. Identification of and responding to young people at risk of engaging with the statutory service system and being able to mobilise the right resources at the right time should see a reduction in reporting to statutory services. CYFSP funded Network Coordination positions are stepping into this space to provide resource knowledge and service access.
3. Identification of specific early intervention initiatives that involve partners, e.g. community providers within schools working with families and young people. CSD funded Family Support and Youth Engagement Team providers operate in the Education regions providing support to young people and to families, however the linkages haven't been made between the two service systems.

The funded services should become integral to the overall support for young people and families in schools. The role of the CYFSP Network Coordinators in developing and maintaining the direct service linkages between the sectors could become the first point of contact between the school in seeking appropriate

support services for young people or families or around addressing specific areas of concern for this cohort within schools. OneLink would also play a vital role as a referral point for schools for children, young people and families seeking support or assistance.

The connection between the NSET teams and Network Coordinators would also be an important linkage between the Education regions and community based supports.

4. Working with young people in Bimberi prior to release – a case management service that supports young people while in Bimberi and assumes a lead role upon release to support with re-engaging with education, support with family to minimise risk of recidivism.

CSD funded Youth Engagement services can provide a continuum of support to young people in detention as they may have a connection with them prior to incarceration. These services can work with the statutory service, either within Bimberi or post Bimberi to deliver a "joined up" statutory and non-statutory service - the former to support the young person in their involvement with the statutory service system (post Bimberi) and encourage their compliance with undertakings to lessen the risk of reoffending or re-incarceration.

5. Increased need for diversion approaches if this is in line with ACT Policing's service model reform. There is potentially a role for the youth services, such as PCYC, to assume greater responsibility for diversion programs given their experience in working with this cohort and their strong relationships with ACT Policing, Bimberi and Youth Justice Services.

Options aimed at minimising young people being detained either on remand or detained due to reporting infractions should be prioritised. Given the high level of recidivism due to non-compliance of bail or release conditions it is imperative that resources are targeted at assisting young people remain in the community as a low cost and low risk option to incarceration.

6. Working with families while the young person is in detention to ensure their support and cooperation upon the young person's release – this can be done with the knowledge and consent of the young person. Families may require support and assistance to prepare for their child's release from detention and how to engage and support them upon release to reintegrate into the family and peer networks. Again FS and YET workers can undertake this role, working in tandem with statutory services prior to release as part of the discharge planning process.

Critical to this approach will be the trust developed between the worker and young person and their family to ensure that undertakings given by services to the young person and their family are followed through and that they can see the value in it for them to engage. This can be encouraged by statutory staff, without their direct involvement, to support young people to engage with community based services post release.

7. Working with families, especially the children, of adults while they are incarcerated. Given the incidence of intergenerational transmission of criminal offending amongst the children of adults in prison it recommended that early engagement of the family following incarceration occurs.
It is acknowledged that families may harbour distrust and resentment at “the system” for their member’s internment it is important that the appropriate service (a non-statutory service) seek to engage with the family.

A process may be required for this to occur – when gathering information at time of sentencing (or pre-sentence report) identify children within the family and seek permission to engage and support them post sentence and during incarceration. The assistance that could be provided may alleviate some of the conditions that create the intergeneration transmission of criminal behaviour.

The provision of parenting programs to incarcerated family members could be another option (currently being trialled in Victoria) in assisting the imprisoned person to develop skills to better engage with their children while visiting or upon release. Such programs could also be offered to the parent with the care of the children while their partner is imprisoned.

Again, these are responsibilities that can be written into the contracts of CSD funded services in working with vulnerable families.