



OMNIBUS SUBMISSION

Community Funding for Hoarding in the ACT - Continuation (Letter of Support)

Driving Lessons for vulnerable young people: ACT Pre-Learner License Course

Molonglo Valley Community Development Coordinator

Transport for vulnerable children to and from Early Learning Programs

10 February 2023

Re: Letter of Support for the continuation of Community Funding for Hoarding in the ACT

To whom it may concern,

Woden Community Service (WCS) is pleased to support the continuation of the Hoarding Case Management Group (HCMG) led by ACT Government's Health Protection Service, and associated community funding.

WCS has worked in partnership with the HCMG since 2019 to deliver the Hoarding Advocacy Support Service (HASS). HASS provides complex case management to people whose hoarding circumstances require cross collaboration by:

- building rapport and trusting relationships with clients experiencing severe and complex hoarding behaviours
- acting as a case manager for the clients referred by the HCMG (in collaboration with the relevant lead government agency)
- providing targeted social and advocacy support to clients which may include facilitating the connection of multiple agencies
- facilitating the provision of domestic services (such as cleaners or gardeners)
- assisting the client to access and navigate existing supports, such as mental health services, NDIS or aged care services
- providing day-to-day liaison between the client and the regulator; and
- where HASS has capacity and where a case manager is already in place from another organisation, WCS may offer mentoring, support and/or assistance for that case manager in relation to the case.

HASS also provides:

- Buried in Treasures (BIT), peer led self-help courses for people living with Hoarding behaviours
- Follow-up Buried in Treasures lectures and groups for people who have already been through BIT courses
- Conference presentations
- Training for the community sector and government agencies about hoarding - understanding the behaviours and triggers that can lead to hoarding and how to work with these as a community or government worker.

WCS endorses Health Protection's commitment to establishing a strategic way forward to managing hoarding across the ACT. For WCS's experience working with people across numerous mental health and housing programs, it is anticipated that an approach which crosses over both the community and government sectors and includes early intervention, multi-disciplinary support for specific cases, care for support persons and training for volunteers and workers, will provide a strong basis this strategic work.

WCS is prepared to continue providing HASS in partnership with Health Protection while further strategic work is being done to determine the most sustainable approach to hoarding in the ACT.

2022-2023 budget consultation submission

Driving Lessons for vulnerable young people: ACT Pre- Learner License Course

Overview:

Vulnerable young people are often required to seek employment when applying for government financial support. For young people in the ACT, this often means applying for jobs where transport is essential to get to and from worksites. However, for many of these young people there is the inability to afford to pay for the process to obtain a driving licence. This barrier for young people can have a flow on effect in all aspects of their lives; unable to gain employment, impacting social and emotional wellbeing, and dependence on government financial assistance. For young people who are trying to work out where they can sleep that night, or who are uncertain if they can afford food for the week, the idea of driving lessons is a luxury they are unable to consider.

For a young person 18 or older, living out of home with no dependents and no employment, the starting Centrelink Youth Allowance figure is \$532. The average hourly cost of a driving lesson in the ACT is \$90, with young people requiring 23 competencies to be signed off and 120 hours to be completed before progressing to unaided 'provisional' driving status. This means that if a young person had no other option, they could be paying up to \$10,800 to obtain their licence. This is particularly relevant for highly isolated young people with no social and family supports. When faced with this prospect, it is highly unlikely that this would be a priority for a vulnerable young person living on a low income.

In an effort to address some of this entrenched and systemic disadvantage, Woden Community Service's (WCS) Youth Engagement Team (YET) has delivered the ACT pre-learner license course (formerly Road Ready) to 53 young people since January 2021. WCS has managed a waiting list of 47 young people seeking to access the program during this time also. The YET deliver the program during each of the four school holiday periods. The program offers up to 15 places in each program to vulnerable young people who live independently, have disengaged from school, missed the free school program or cannot afford to attend a paid course. In that time, all 53 young people have passed the course due to having access to smaller groups, additional one on one support, slow paced program delivery and access to literacy and numeracy support.

The majority of people supported through this program have experienced significant challenges in finding accessible driving lessons to build on their success. Whilst WCS can continue to deliver the ACT Pre-Learner License Course, the gap of inexpensive or subsidized driving lessons remains a primary barrier to young people gaining their provisional licence. The YET team are unable however to support young people to do the required 120 hours driving required.

Proposed transport program:

WCS proposes a pilot program to provide a combination of 50 sponsored driving programs through 5th Gear Driving School (30 hours off the total 120 hours required and reduced to 10-15 competencies). This would involve employing casual, qualified driving instructors to deliver weekly one hour driving lessons for young people towards their hours and competencies. Once the driving program is done, young people would then continue weekly driving lessons with casual workers until all hours and core competencies are completed.

The young people would engage over a 12-month period, then be supported to transition from their 'learner' licence to a 'provisional' licence. Throughout this journey, young people would also be supported by a youth worker through individual case work, developing goals and working toward obtaining employment. This would be done by:

- Engaging employment services to identify employment opportunities.
- Developing a resume and job readiness skills.
- Developing a budget and financial planning for a car purchase.
- Increasing independence, social and emotional wellbeing.

The cost for this program over a 12-month period is:

Breakdown of costs	Provide a brief explanation of goods, services, inclusions, exclusions and price breakdown against each item	Unit [FTE, hourly, each, lump sum]	1st Year Unit Price (excl GST)
Staff costs	Includes staffing costs and on costs for 5 Driving Instructors @ SCHADs Level 4	1.32 FTE	98,110.57
Program Costs	Certificate IV in Driving Instructions for 5 Driving Insructors	lumpsum	37,500.00
	50 Driving Program Packages	lumpsum	22,700.00
	Petrol for 20,000 kms per year	lumpsum	2,400.00
Admin Costs	Includes marketing & promotional costs, human resources, work health & safety compliance, and occupancy expenses	% of funding	35,277.93
TOTAL COST (GST EXCL)			\$ 195,988.50

Measuring the outcomes:

The outcomes from providing a driving program for young people can be measured against the ACT Wellbeing Framework:

Table 2: ACT Wellbeing Framework:

Wellbeing Domain	Outcomes for young people
Access and connectivity	Young people have increased knowledge and enhanced motivation to access to support services in the community.
Economy	Increased opportunities for unemployed young people based on the identified barrier of not having a license. Increased awareness of employment support services to strengthen pathways to employment.
Education and life-long learning	Increased life skills, strengthening pathways to further education. Awareness of mainstream and alternative education programs. Increased capacity of sharing knowledge within the wider family unit.

health	Increased social and emotional wellbeing. Strengthened links to community support services. Establish peer networks and positive social supports.
Housing and home	Access to housing support services and increased housing suitability.
Living standards	Increased capacity to engage with employment support programs and training providers. Increased capacity of sharing knowledge within the wider family unit.
Social connection	Establish peer networks and positive social supports. Increased access to youth support services. Increased social and emotional wellbeing.

References:

- Centrelink website- payments and accessibility. <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-much-youth-allowance-for-students-and-apprentices-you-can-get?context=43916>
- Road Ready Centre ACT- Certificate IV costing. <https://roadreadycentre.com.au/act-certificate-iv-in-driving-instruction/>
- 5th Gear driving school- Driving package costing <https://www.fifthgear.com.au/specialised-training>

2023-2024 Budget Consultation Submission

Molonglo Valley Community Development Coordinator:

Identified Need

In the past nine years Woden Community Service (WCS) has been part of the establishment of the new region of the Molonglo Valley (MV) as the community partner of ACT Government Suburban Land Agency (SLA) Mingle and Whitlam Place Curation program, along with the independent provision of Out of Hours School Care services, community programs and emergency food relief. The MV is a rapidly growing area comprising of Wright, Coombs, Denman Prospect and Whitlam, with an estimated population of over 12,000 residents. The 2018 to 2058 ACT Government Population Projection estimates, outline the population is to exceed 55,000. As the MV grows rapidly it is crucial that they continue to be supported to lead social and economic development at the local level, drive community-led solutions, and are connected with services and the wider community.

SLA funds a Community Development Program called Mingle for the first five years of a suburb's development. Throughout 2020 and 2021 WCS worked with the SLA in the suburbs of Wright and Coombs, as the ACTSLA reached the natural completion of the program. Mingle and the dedicated WCS Community Development Officer (CDO) have since moved to Whitlam. In the year following Mingle's exit from Coombs and Wright, WCS have noted the following impact on community development;

- Momentum has been lost without a dedicated CDO to connect individuals to resources, organisations, grants and other community members.
- Without the CDO having a presence online and in social groups, there has been disengagement from existing activities.
- Residents are travelling outside of their local area to connect eg. Coombs residents are showing up at Whitlam events.
- While planning is underway for a Molonglo Commercial Centre, there remains a lack of social and economic infrastructure to meet current community population and need.

WCS does not have staffing capacity to provide ongoing support in MV. At present WCS engagement within MV is limited to the following;

- Molonglo Movers: weekly sports and arts for children with additional needs. This program is funded by a Department of Social Services grant and is contracted to June 2024.
- English Conversation Group
- Supported community-led initiatives;
 - Falls Prevention Exercise Group
 - Mums 'n' Bubs Exercise Group
 - Young at Heart: Social group for seniors

With additional funding WCS can provide a transitional period of sustainable community development initiatives in MV. This leads to opportunities for community,

particularly those that are vulnerable, to continue to establish a sense of community identity, civic pride and self-reliance.

Demographic Data

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Groups

MV	ACT	National
30.1% speak a language other than English - ABS 2016 Census	23.8% speak a language other than English ABS 2016 Census	22.2% speak a language other than English ABS 2016 Census

Housing ACT (HACT) and WCS have identified the following cohorts across 131 tenancies in the MV:

- Single parents and young people
- People living with mental health concerns
- People with financial hardship
- People living with a disability
- People facing domestic violence
- People living with alcohol and other drug concerns

Proposed Program

The Molonglo Valley Community Development Officer (MVCDO) will provide continued support to residents of the MV. The MVCDO will build on existing connections, relationships, and initiatives to re-engage the community and achieve positive community outcomes. At present WCS is in a unique position to do this given existing positive relationships within the region.

As the region of MV has grown, WCS has sought opportunities to partner with Government, NGOs and community to provide community-based services in the region. WCS has expanded its service to the MV through partnerships and one-off grants to try to meet community needs and bridge identified gaps. These include the WCS Child Youth and Family Support Program, CD activities, Volunteer Programs, Emergency Food Relief Support and Children Services.

The WCS Community Development Team identified an opportunity to build a network of invested agencies and established the MV Peer Network. WCS has strong working relationships with HACT, SLA, Multicultural Hub, MVCF, Charles Weston School and Evelyn Scott School. Collaborations with these stakeholders have created a foundation for partnerships and continued communication that will allow WCS to identify and holistically support groups and individuals.

Program Aim:

- Community-driven change at a local level to build economic and social participation
- Skill development and capacity building amongst community to increase levels of self-reliance and wellbeing

- Support community to identify, measure, and achieve outcomes by embedding sustainable development practices and creating inclusive communities

Table 2: ACT Wellbeing Framework – Community Development Program

Wellbeing Domain	Wellbeing Indicator	Community Development Outcome
Access and connectivity	Access to services	Enhanced motivation to engage in services. Established and strengthened links to community services based on needs and circumstances.
Economy	Employment	Increased life skills, soft skills and capacity building strengthening pathways to employment. Increased opportunities for unemployed to address individual barriers to employment.
	Businesses contribute to community	Established and strengthened links to local businesses. Increased opportunities for local business to engage in community.
Education and life-long learning	Learning for life	Established and strengthened links to community services. Increased life skills, soft skills and capacity building strengthening pathways to education. Established and strengthened links to mainstream or alternative education providers. Increased capacity for sharing skills, knowledge, and resources within community.
Environment and Climate	Connection to environment	Enhanced understanding of how to care for local environment. Established and strengthen ties to local environment. Increased likelihood to use local environment as a space to connect with community.
Governance and Institutions	Feeling that voice and perspective matter	Increased understanding of how to effect systems change with 'bottom-up' approach. Established opportunities to contribute meaningfully to community. Increased confidence in sharing ideas and knowledge.
	Advocacy	Increased motivation to advocate for individual and community needs.
Health	Overall health	Established and strengthened links to community services based on needs and circumstances. Improved positive social supports and networks.
	Mental health	Established and strengthened links to community services based on needs and circumstances. Improved positive social supports and networks. Reduced social isolation.

	Access to health services	Enhanced motivation to engage in services. Established and strengthened links to community services based on needs and circumstances.
Housing and home	Homelessness	Established and strengthened links to community services based on needs and circumstances.
	Housing stability	Access to advocacy for suitable housing.
Identity and Belonging	Sense of belonging and inclusion	Improved access to community groups and services. Enhanced connections with neighbours and local networks.
	Participate in community	Increased opportunities to engage in community activities. Increased motivation to participate in community.
	Community leadership	Increased confidence to lead in the achievement of positive life outcomes
Living Standards	Income levels	Increased capacity to engage with existing employment/training services and/or work towards gaining employment. Enhanced motivation to engage with specialised employment services.
	Equitable access to community activities	Increased opportunities to engage in community at a reduced or no cost.
Safety	Community resilience to emergencies	Improved positive social supports and networks.
	Emergency services	Improved confidence to engage with emergency services.
	Domestic and family violence	Improved positive social supports and networks.
	Perceived safety	Enhanced motivation to engage in services and in community. Improved positive social supports and networks. Enhanced neighbourhood relationships. Improved shared spaces.
	Victims of crime	Established and strengthened links to community services based on needs and circumstances.
Social connection	Levels of volunteering	Enhanced motivation to engage with specialised employment and volunteering services.
	Participation in community	Increased opportunities to engage in community activities. Increased motivation to participate in community.

	events and activities	Increased confidence to lead community activities and events.
	Sense of social connection	Established and strengthened relationships in neighbourhood. Increased opportunities to connect with community.
	Levels of loneliness	Improved positive social supports and networks. Reduced social isolation.

Cost:

Breakdown of costs	Provide a brief explanation of goods, services, inclusions, exclusions and price breakdown against each item	Unit [FTE, hourly, each, lump sum]	1st Year Unit Price (excl GST)
Staff costs	Includes staffing costs and on costs for 1.6 FTE Community Development Coordinators & Management	1.6 FTE	\$196,935
Program Costs	Includes telephone, IT equipment, staff development, networking, motor vehicle, parking costs	Lump sum	\$11,312
Program Brokerage Costs	Includes materials to facilitate and support community driven initiatives, as well as community room hire, catering etc.	lumpsum	\$21,000
Admin Costs	Includes marketing & promotional costs, human resources, work health & safety compliance, and occupancy expenses	% of funding	\$41,264
TOTAL COSTS			\$270,511

Cost Savings:

Investment in Community Development reduces demand on mental health services and emergency services. Socially connected communities report greater wellbeing outcomes, safer neighbourhoods and strong recovery from natural disasters. A UK study found that people without social support were five times more likely to experience mental illness than those with support (Marmot, 1999).

A study in Victoria Australia also found a significant association between social isolation and low mental health scores (Savage, Bailey and O'Connell, 2003). Both studies give evidence to the health benefits of communities receiving support to connect and build a local social network. Additionally, studies have shown that

when community participation increases by just 10% local violent crime rates reduce by 1.9% (Carcach and Huntley, 2002).

Reduced crime decreases demand on responsive services and fosters a sense of safety which consequently increases the likelihood of further community participation. Further, consistent significant positive correlations have been found between community social cohesion and disaster resilience (Townshend, Awosoga, Kulig and Fan, 2014). The above demonstrates the long-term holistic cost benefit of investing in dedicated Community Development Coordinators for the developing Molonglo Valley region.

References

ACT Government 2020. *ACT Wellbeing Framework*. Available from: [ACT Government Wellbeing Framework](#) [16/05/2022]

Carcach C and Huntley C., 2002. *Community Participation and Regional Crime*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. Available from: [Community participation and regional crime \(aic.gov.au\)](#) [16/05/2022]

Marmot M., 1999. The Solid Facts: The Social Determinants of health. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia: official journal of Australian Association of Health Promotion*, 9(2), pp. 133-139.

Savage, S. A., Bailey, S. R., & O'Connell, B. (2003). Health status and participation in a range of activities in an Australian community. *Rural and remote health*, 3(1), pp. 154.

Townshend, I., Awosoga, O., Kulig, J. and Fan, H., 2014. Social cohesion and resilience across communities that have experienced a disaster. *Natural Hazards*, 76(2), pp. 913-938.

2023-2024 budget consultation submission

Transport for vulnerable children to and from Early Learning Programs:

Overview:

The 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data showed that 26.7% of children in the ACT start school vulnerable in 1 or more of the domains. This is an increase of 2.1% and 124 children since the 2018 census. The numbers of children who experience vulnerability has been steadily increasing in every census that is completed. There are many factors that contribute to why children from birth to school age experience vulnerability. These can include but are not limited to.

- Family conflict and/or family breakdown, including family violence.
- A parent/guardian with mental illness, substance abuse, or physical illness.
- A care giver who is young, isolated and/or unsupported.
- A family that experiences significant social or economic disadvantage that adversely impacts on their ability to care for a child.

Regular and consistent attendance at a quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) service improves brain development leading to long term increases in achievement and school success. Quality programs have a positive effect on children's long term social and emotional development, leading to better educational and life outcomes. (Barnett,2002). Other benefits of quality early education and care for vulnerable children include, stronger social skills and improved language and literacy skills.

Woden Community Service (WCS) provided early learning to 93 vulnerable children in the 12-months to December 2022 which is an increase of 18 children from the previous 12 month period. Many of these families do not own or use a car. WCS knows that one of the barriers for vulnerable children accessing ECEC programs is lack of transport. Many families who access early learning through the CSP program, the 3-year-old initiative or additional child care subsidy do not have transport and rely on public transport or family and friends to help to access Early Learning. Many early learning centres are not on direct bus routes or near schools. This results in children either not attending or only attending for a small portion in the middle of the day. A single father, who is attending one of our services in Woden has been completing a three hour round bus trip so both children are able to participate in early learning.

Children experience the full benefit of our programs when they are able to participate in all aspects of the program over the day. The lack of routine for children who only attend intermittently results in children being unable to form strong educator and peer relationships. This also means that children have difficulty settling into the service, spending much of their day needing to be comforted rather than joining in and benefiting from learning experiences provided.

Proposed transport program:

WCS proposes a pilot program to provide transport for up to 5 children per day to Lollipop and Lyons Early Learning Centres. The transport program will pick the child up from their home and take them to the early learning service they are enrolled in, and collect them from the service at the end of the day and take them back to their home. Two educators will be needed at all times to pick up and drop off the children.

The cost for this program over a 12-month period

Breakdown of Costs	Provide a brief explanation of goods, services, inclusion, exclusions and price breakdown against each item	Unit (FTE, hourly, each, lumpsum)	1st Year Unit Price (excl GST)
Staff Costs	Includes staffing costs and on cost for a 25 hours per week casual educator over 40 weeks	1.32 FTE	\$128,691.94
Program Costs	Motor Vehicle-related costs, including 7-seater vehicle lease costs, insurance, parking and maintenance	lumpsum	\$20,391.00
	Petrol for 20,000 kms per year	lumpsum	\$5,120.00
	Purchase of car seats x 5	lumpsum	\$1,050.00
Admin Costs	Includes marketing & promotional costs, human resources, WHS and occupancy expenses	% of funding	\$34,079.91
TOTAL COSTS (GST EXCL)			\$189,332.85

This pilot program aligns with Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT: which has some of the following components:

- Scope universal access to early childhood education for three-year-old children.
- Provide long term access to ECEC services for the Children's Services Program.
- Explore flexible options for access to extended hours early education and care.
- Examining the alignment between funding and child-needs.

The **ACT Well Being Framework** also highlights the importance of access to education for all people living in the ACT.

Domain Name	Definition	Aspiration for wellbeing in this area
Access and connectivity	Getting around to places we value and accessing the services we need	Our planning, mobility and service systems allow us to move around our liveable city and access the types of places and services we need, when we need them. Those who require additional support to gain independence can access responsive, tailored services.
Education and life-long learning	Gaining the skills and education needed at all stages of life.	Canberrans have equitable access to education and learning opportunities, through all ages and stages of life, to develop and gain the skills to live life well.
Safety	Feeling safe and being safe	Canberrans are and feel safe and secure around their families, homes, community and on-line.

Advantages of this program:

Providing transport to these families to ensure consistency in attendance in early childhood programs contributes to better outcomes for children. This also allows families to attend other programs and/or appointments as necessary.

Children whose families are referred to participate in early learning programs by Child and Youth Protection Services and other case management services are less likely to be placed in out of home care.

Access to early learning can help break the cycle of disadvantage. Developmental vulnerability is approximately a third lower in children who attend quality early learning services. Children who participate in ECEC programs are better prepared for school and tend to perform better academically (OECD 2018).

Measuring the outcomes:

The outcomes from this transport program can be measured through:

- child attendances at the program
- documented observations of children's development against the outcomes from the Early Years Learning Framework.
- parental participation in court ordered parenting and other programs.

Cost savings:

Investment in early intervention delivers significant savings with reduced need for access to services later in life.

A PwC report, commissioned by The Front Project, showed that Australian universal early childhood education programs produce a return on investment of 1:2, and deliver \$4.75 billion of benefits nationally to children, families, government and business. (Bolton, 2019)

Attendance at ECEC programs may not eliminate all challenges for children but it will significantly reduce the severity of issues for many.

'Over ten years, every dollar invested in early intervention saves \$2, by ensuring children and young people are able to stay safely at home' (SVA-Report Summary)- The Economic Case for Early Intervention 2019)

References:

AEDC Australia nearly childhood development census 2021

ACT Wellbeing Framework, ACT Canberra 2020

Barnett, S (2002) Early Childhood Education: School Reform Proposals, the research evidence. Information Age Publishing USA.

Bolton, Robert. (2019) An economic argument for extending preschool for two years. Financial Review.

Early learning matters: International early learning and child wellbeing study OECD. (2018)

Oberlkaid, Frank. ACA conference (2015) Early Childhood Development Building Blocks for a Successful and Prosperous Society.

Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT, Canberra 2020