



YWCA of Canberra

Submission to inform the development of the 2012/13 ACT Government Budget

February 2012

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The YWCA of Canberra proudly recognises the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including the right to own and control their cultures, and pays respect around these rights. The YWCA of Canberra commits to respecting and actively supporting the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and worldviews.

In recent years the YWCA of Canberra has worked proactively to build respect and opportunities for reconciliation. In October 2009 we launched our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and in 2010 refreshed and relaunched our RAP.

Our RAP vision is that through progressing reconciliation and healing we will improve the wellbeing of both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the wider Australian community. Acknowledging the continuing custodianship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of land and culture, we embrace a grass roots approach involving the whole of the YWCA of Canberra community – clients of our programs, external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, staff, members and Board in our reconciliation journey.

We support initiatives and proposals brought forward in the ACT Budget process that move to address disadvantage, advance reconciliation and support Indigenous peoples' rights and dignity. A particular initiative that has been identified in our RAP is support for the campaign for constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We encourage and support the ACT Government's commitment to this campaign and look forward to opportunities to work in partnership to promote this important recognition.

THE YWCA OF CANBERRA - WHO WE ARE

The YWCA of Canberra is part of a national and international movement.

Strengthened by diversity, the Organisation draws together members to create opportunities for growth, leadership and empowerment of women and girls in order to attain a common vision: peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all people.

The YWCA is one of the world's largest women's organisations. We are represented in 122 countries, and have a global outreach of 25 million.

Across Australia, the YWCA works with approximately 250,000 individuals and families each year in over 270 sites across Australia. YWCA has an annual turnover of \$37 million (over one-third of this money is self-generated) and we provide family-friendly employment for over 700 staff.

The YWCA of Canberra is a flexible and responsive organisation that has been providing services within the Canberra community since its inception in 1929 and 2009 saw the Organisation celebrate 80 years of working with and in the local community. The YWCA of Canberra is a feminist organisation with a primary focus on social justice and a passionate commitment to community. Our vision is *Women Achieving Their Potential*.

The YWCA of Canberra is a membership organisation, and invites women and men across the ACT to become actively involved in our work. The YWCA of Canberra's Board of Management comprises twelve women elected from and by our membership, at least 30 percent of who are young women aged 30 or under.

The YWCA of Canberra provides services across the ACT in the areas of Children's Services, Youth and Family Services, Housing and Social Inclusion, Training and Women's Leadership.

I.I. OUR VALUES

The YWCA of Canberra believes that everyone who is part of the community has the right to contribute to, and share equally in, the benefits of the community's social, cultural and economic development. The values which guide and inspire our work are:

Equity and fairness – equality of opportunity, rights and access to social, cultural and economic well-being

Diversity – valuing diversity of people and communities and respecting differences in culture, race, religion, sexuality, abilities and lifestyles

Self determination and empowerment – women have the information, skills and resources to participate in community life, exercise choices and control their lives

Women's leadership – especially the development of young women's leadership as a means to creating a better world in which reconciliation, justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment prevail

Reconciliation with Indigenous Australians – acknowledging the ongoing custodianship by Indigenous Australians of land and culture, and working with Indigenous communities in partnership for the well-being of the whole community

Stewardship – of the resources of the YWCA, our community and our environment.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

The YWCA of Canberra works towards the following ends:

- Women influencing, leading and deciding
- Women achieving security and independence through their economic participation
- Women and their families have access to the conditions and resources they need to lead healthy lives: food, shelter, education, income, a sustainable environment, social justice and community cohesion
- Communities that are safe and connected
- Children and young people building the skills and attributes to create a better future
- YWCA of Canberra is a leading, ethical and sustainable organisation.

**FROM CHALLENGE TO OPPORTUNITY:
Looking after all Canberrans in uncertain times**

The YWCA of Canberra is pleased to provide this submission to inform the development of the 2012/13 ACT Government Budget. As in previous years, we see the development of the Territory Budget as an opportunity to ensure that the needs of all Canberrans are addressed and the resources of this great community are shared by all its citizens. The Budget process provides a great opportunity to create a more equal community where all share prosperity, and the vulnerable are not left behind.

In our submission last year the YWCA of Canberra used this opportunity to communicate to Government our vision for the future of Canberra. We applauded the opportunity provided through the *Time To Talk Canberra 2030* campaign to articulate the opportunities and challenges before us as we begin to envision this community in 2030. In the development of the 2012-2013 Territory Budget, we urge the Government to continue to take a long term view and resist the temptation to make short term financial decisions that undermine progress towards a sustainable, equal and just community in the long term.

The past two years have been challenging for the global economy and we fully appreciate the pressures on the Territory Budget due to an uncertain economic climate and the Government's aim to return the Territory Budget to surplus. We also keenly appreciate the need for the 2012/2013 Territory Budget to make some difficult decisions in relation to resource allocation and funding priorities.

While we understand the challenges presented in developing a fair and balanced budget, this submission highlights key areas of need which we believe pose a significant risk if not resourced appropriately. As in previous years, this submission has been developed through a process of identifying key issues that the YWCA of Canberra is presented with as we work everyday with disadvantaged and at risk women, their families and communities.

Recognising the need to prioritise, the YWCA of Canberra identifies the following as key areas that require attention and resourcing. These priority areas are:

- **Continuing the effort to respond to the housing affordability crisis in the ACT** and ensuring appropriate housing is provided to women and their families across the continuum. In particular, there is the need to responding to the issue of affordable rental for disadvantaged and low income women, including older women;
- **Appropriately resourcing the ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011-17**, including resourcing prevention activities identified within the plan
- **Valuing and supporting the sector which supports Canberra's most vulnerable citizens** by recognising the significant structural reform that is being undertaken by the ACT Community Sector and ensuring that it is appropriately resourced and supported to undertake this change.

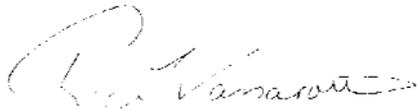
While there are many budgetary challenges in this and future years, the YWCA of Canberra firmly believes that there continues to be opportunities to invest in early intervention and prevention responses across these priority issues and others. By reducing the numbers of women and families in crisis, when resources allocated need to be much greater and positive outcomes are more difficult to achieve, this approach will result in better social and economic outcomes for individuals and the whole community.

In this submission the YWCA of Canberra also identifies other priority areas that require on-going resourcing and attention from the ACT Government. Reflecting the YWCA of

Canberra's strategic directions, these areas represent the key wellbeing outcomes we believe are needed to ensure a sustainable, healthy and vibrant community:

- Investment in women's leadership and engagement in decision making at all levels of the community, government and business
- Supporting and investing in children and young people to assist them to gain the skills and attributes to create a better future
- Ensuring all Canberrans have access to the conditions and resources they need to lead a healthy life and participate fully in the community.

As always, the YWCA of Canberra aims to be a constructive and valued partner of the ACT Government in responding to the significant challenges faced by this community. The YWCA of Canberra is committed to collaboration and innovation to foster a more equal community where disadvantaged and vulnerable Canberrans are able to contribute more fully, both economically and socially, to create even greater outcomes for this community that we are all a part of, and passionate about.



Rebecca Vassarotti
Executive Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We call on the ACT Government to continue their engagement with existing and potential affordable and community housing providers to identify new and innovative affordable housing proposals, and particularly support the Inner North Project.
2. We call on ACT Government continue to inject funds to increase the availability of affordable housing through Housing ACT and Community Housing providers.
3. We call on ACT Government to support calls to improve the National Rental Affordability Scheme.
4. We call on ACT Government to ensure that appropriate community facilities are designed as part of the redevelopment of the BAC complex.
5. We call on ACT Government to consider increasing the proportion of public housing stock to be included in the BAC development to 15% in the final development proposal.
6. We call on ACT Government to make a commitment to re-house the vast majority of public housing clients affected by the redevelopment into Inner North locations, and make a commitment to ensure a significant proportion of public housing stock continues to be located in this area.
7. We call on ACT Government to provide additional supports to residents affected by the redevelopment, including the provision of individual support, counseling and referral.
8. We call on ACT Government to request that generalist homelessness services provide specific information about how they will create safe spaces and provide support for women within their service as part of their contractual obligations.
9. We call on the ACT Government to commit to ensuring gender-specific homelessness services will continue to be available to women living within the ACT.
10. We recommend that the Government ensures that all services have access to regular gender and age disaggregated data on housing and homelessness to increase the responsiveness of services to the needs of women, in particular young women.
11. We call on the ACT Government to invest resources to support the implementation of the *ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011-2017*. In particular, we urge investment into prevention activities as identified under the Plan.
12. We call on the ACT Government to urgently address the lack of gender disaggregated data in the area of violence, and beyond.
13. We call on the ACT Government to immediately and fully fund wage increase that flow from the implementation of the wage case for all Government contracts that are held by the community sector. We implore the Government not to disadvantage organisations that have worked to deliver fair and just wages in the implementation of the decision.
14. We encourage the ACT Government to work with their Federal, State and Territory colleagues to ensure uniform implementation of wage increases that flow from the Fair Wage Case.

15. We call on the ACT Government to consider the budget submission submitted by the Community Sector Leaders Forum and its call to increase the base funding of ACT Government contracts by 15%.
16. We seek the ACT Government's consideration of providing a small seeding grant to support the establishment of the Community Sector Leaders Forum.
17. The YWCA of Canberra supports the work occurring around procurement processes for the ACT Community Sector, and recommends the ACT Government move to ten year service agreements.
18. We urge the ACT Government to streamline financial reporting processes and create a standard reporting framework across government
19. We encourage ACT Government to work together with the community sector in the development of Outcomes Reporting Frameworks and establishing a responsive evaluation framework to measure effectiveness and impact of social programs.
20. We call upon the ACT Government to increase the pool of funds available through the ACT Women's Grants Program.
21. We urge ACT Government to invest in more regular data collection around the gender diversity in all sectors of the ACT economy so we can track our progress around greater gender diversity.
22. We call upon the ACT Government to support the community based childcare sector as it transitions to the new National Quality Framework for Childcare.
23. We request that the ACT Government continues to engage with providers around implementation issues with the current regulations and work to ensure that these issues can be resolved.
24. We urge the ACT Government to support campaigns to raise the remuneration of early childcare educators working in the childcare sector.
25. We seek the ACT Government to consider the provision of a seeding grant to support establishment costs of this new sub sector peak organisation.
26. The YWCA of Canberra recommends that ACT Government continues to enable after preschool care in appropriate school sites in Canberra.
27. The YWCA of Canberra calls on the ACT Government to provide adequate subsidies to support children with special needs to access mainstream school age care programs.
28. The YWCA of Canberra encourages the ACT Government to work with providers to explore ways of supporting childcare workers to access additional specialist training to support children with special needs who access mainstream school age care programs.
29. The YWCA of Canberra urges the ACT Government to urgently address the issue of providing appropriate care options for children with special needs who are beyond primary school age.
30. The YWCA of Canberra calls on ACT Government to sponsor a 'Middle Years' Symposium that builds on initiatives such as the research Symposium held last year by

the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People, aimed at exploring the evidence base around best practice working with this group of young people, and as a signalling of a commitment to do more work in this area.

31. We encourage the ACT Government to create opportunities for ongoing support of programs that work to support the *Youth Commitment* and strong educational outcomes for at risk young people.
32. We ask the ACT Government to support and resource the recommendations that come out of the ACT Targeted Assistance Strategy.
33. We call on the ACT Government to provide ongoing support for programs proven to be successful when supported through Grants Programs, such as the *Getting Healthy in the Inner North*.
34. We ask the ACT Government to consider additional support for gender specific health programs that support women impacted by illnesses such as breast cancer.
35. We request that the ACT Government to consider reversing the policy decision that saw a significant financial burden placed on community organisation tenants occupying ACT Government facilities around general repairs and maintenance.
36. We encourage ACT Government to use the opportunity of the development of a new community pool facility in Gungahlin to design opportunities for increasing access and a feeling of safety and security for all women living in the region (and beyond).

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Submission addresses priorities identified by the YWCA of Canberra as part of its vision for the future of Canberra. As outlined above, the recommendations set out in this paper have been divided into two parts – key areas of need, for which resourcing and support is imperative, and other priority areas, for which the YWCA of Canberra recommend the ACT Government continue to provide assistance and resources.

2. Key Areas of Need

2.1. Affordable and safe housing

For a number of years, the YWCA of Canberra's budget submission has highlighted the need for affordable and safe housing for women to be a priority area in the Territory Budget. Our Housing and Social Inclusion Unit continues to witness great hardship for families due to the lack of affordable housing, with limited ongoing rental options for people on low incomes in both public housing and the private rental market continuing to be a particular challenge.

We have welcomed the ACT Government's commitment to this issue and particularly appreciate support such as the Franklin Charity House initiative that will facilitate significant donations to organisations doing work in this area, including the YWCA of Canberra.

The YWCA of Canberra is committed to being part of the solution and has committed organisational resources to establishing an affordable housing program. Through this program the Organisation will be able to provide seven affordable housing tenancies to disadvantaged older women in the second half of 2012. In this endeavour we have worked closely with ACT Government and Community Housing Canberra. This is a small but we hope significant contribution which demonstrates the YWCA of Canberra's commitment to look for solutions to the issue of homelessness and housing affordability in our community. We particularly welcome the opportunity to continue to explore ways that investments made by organisations such as ourselves are able to make the greatest impact.

2.1.1. Affordable rental options

The ACT Government is well versed in the issues of affordable housing in the ACT, and the particular challenges in creating affordable rental in the private market. As noted the YWCA of Canberra is working to provide some alternative options and there are many more opportunities that could be identified.

The Organisation's submission to the 2011/12 Territory Budget Consultation last year outlined concerns about the growing evidence that older women are facing particular challenges accessing appropriate and affordable long term rental options. We continue to engage with the ACT Government, Community Housing Canberra and others to explore opportunities to address this emerging issue, including through initiatives such as the Inner North Project.

The YWCA is also engaging on the issue of affordable housing and rental options at a national level and is particularly interested in how the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) can be improved to enable it to be used as a pathway out of homelessness. Nationally we are advocating for changes as outlined below, and would advocate the ACT Government take a similar position on this issue:

- Fund the further 50,000 units proposed under the original National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) scheme
- Extend the NRAS program beyond 2014 with the commitment to a new round of nation building funding
- Amend the NRAS program to ensure that it brings online a greater supply of two-four bedroom properties (for example, by introducing a sliding scale tax incentive).
- Amend the NRAS program so that smaller developments can be funded under the program
- Support research to identify the gendered dimensions of homelessness and housing, and ensure they are addressed in government programs to secure housing and improve housing affordability across Australia
- Funding for work around gender and housing to be undertaken under the National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing
- Establish a long-term Affordable Housing Growth Fund
- Reduce capital gains tax exemption from 50% to 40%, unless the gain is in relation to affordable and social housing through approved entities

1. We call on the ACT Government to continue their engagement with existing and potential affordable and community housing providers to identify new and innovative affordable housing proposals, and particularly support the Inner North Project.
2. We call on ACT Government continue to inject funds to increase the availability of affordable housing through Housing ACT and Community Housing providers.
3. We call on ACT Government to support calls to improve the National Rental Affordability Scheme.

2.1.2. Maintenance of Public Housing Stock in the Inner North of Canberra

The YWCA of Canberra supports moves by the ACT Government to revitalize and redevelop public housing estates in the inner north of Canberra, in particular the BAC flat complexes in Ainslie. As a community organisation that has been working in this highly disadvantaged community for many years, we support a process that recognizes the need to improve public housing in the area and create more sustainable communities, and engages residents throughout this process.

In the design of the new development there is a need to ensure that appropriate community facilities are included to enable support for disadvantaged communities located in this region to continue. There are significant opportunities in designing physical space in a manner that creates more connected communities, and creates the opportunities for community members to develop their strengths and participate more fully, economically and socially.

There is also support for moving away from developments that have high densities of social housing clustered together and support a mixed development opportunity. We do note that the current proposal suggests a mix of 10% of public housing. We would urge the consideration of increasing this proportion to 15% to ensure that a greater number of current residents can stay close to their existing supports and networks.

If there is a reduction of public housing stock attached to these redevelopments there is a need to ensure that stock replacement occurs in the Inner North. This is necessary to ensure that these highly disadvantaged communities are not further isolated from services and facilities by being relocated into suburbs that are far from their established networks and supports.

4. We call on ACT Government to ensure that appropriate community facilities are designed as part of the redevelopment of the BAC complex.
5. We call on ACT Government to consider increasing the proportion of public housing stock to be included in the BAC development to 15% in the final development proposal.
6. We call on ACT Government to make a commitment to re-house the vast majority of public housing clients affected by the redevelopment into Inner North locations, and make a commitment to ensure a significant proportion of public housing stock continues to be located in this area.
7. We call on ACT Government to provide additional supports to residents affected by the redevelopment, including the provision of individual support, counseling and referral.

2.1.3. Safe and supportive homelessness services for women

Domestic violence and sexual assault remain key causes for women experiencing homelessness and accessing homelessness and housing support services. In recognition of this reality, both the availability of gender specific homelessness services and the provision of safe spaces for women within generalist services remains vital to ensuring women at risk of and experiencing homelessness are safe and supported.

The need for the Government to ensure the ability of generalist services to create safe spaces and provide support for women is particularly pertinent given the recent restructure of the youth homelessness sector, which will result in the closure of the specific homelessness service for young women. Young women are at particular risk of homelessness and gender-based violence, and services must be responsive to their needs to ensure young women continue to seek and receive the support they need.

8. We call on ACT Government to request that generalist homelessness services provide specific information about how they will create safe spaces and provide support for women within their service as part of their contractual obligations.
9. We call on the ACT Government to commit to ensuring gender-specific homelessness services will continue to be available to women living within the ACT.
10. We recommend that the Government ensures that all services have access to regular gender and age disaggregated data on housing and homelessness to increase the responsiveness of services to the needs of women, in particular young women.

2.2. A Safe and Connected Community

The impact of violence against women in our community is recognized by ACT Government, and the YWCA of Canberra applauds the development and release of *Our Responsibility: Ending Violence Against Women and Children. The ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011-2017*.

The YWCA of Canberra is pleased to support the Strategy and be involved through the participation in the ACT Governance Group. We also strongly support its links to the *National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* and fully endorse the need for collaborative work in this area. To this end we are honoured to have the role of the ACT non-government representative on the National Implementation Plan Panel.

The release of the Plan however signals the first step in the journey of creating a safe community for us all, and there is significant work ahead as we move into the implementation phase. There is a need to appropriately resource work that is identified in the Plan, and in particular resource the important prevention work identified as a priority in both National and Territory processes.

The YWCA of Canberra has been working for some time in the area of violence prevention, focusing specifically on the area of respectful relationships, through the development of significant resources under the banner *Relationship Things*. This work has included the development of a resource booklet for young people, training and resource kit for professionals working with young people, sexual and reproductive resources and health promotion resources. Over the five years we have been doing this work over 10,000 resources have been distributed to young people in the ACT, and the resources have been used extensively around Australia and internationally. The Organisation's experience in working with the resources to date has indicated that these resources need to be further developed into the future to draw on the learnings from the implementation so far, and to develop resources for different audiences including for a younger age group (8-12) and for young people in a range of settings. To date this work has been primarily self funded and the capacity for the YWCA of Canberra to continue fund this work, particularly program work, is a limiting factor in the effectiveness and level of impact.

Another key issue identified in the plan is how we will measure the effectiveness and the impact of actions identified. This task is severely hampered by the lack of significant gender disaggregated data that is currently available, particularly at a population basis. The YWCA of Canberra has undertaken a body of work recently around developing a much stronger evaluation / evidence base through the use of a Results Based Accountability tool and this once again has highlighted the lack of meaningful data in this area.

11. We call on the ACT Government to invest resources to support the implementation of the *ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011-2017*. In particular, we urge investment into prevention activities as identified under the Plan.
12. We call on the ACT Government to urgently address the lack of gender disaggregated data in the area of violence, and beyond.

2.3. A sustainable community sector

The issue of ensuring a sustainable community sector continues to be an issue of concern for the YWCA of Canberra. As this issue is neglected year after year sustainability of the sector looming as a significant issue.

2.3.1. Pay Equity for Women in the Community Sector

The YWCA of Canberra is committed to seeing a fair community, where all workers are remunerated fairly and not discriminated on the basis of gender. We are somewhat dismayed to see that women's pay is actually going backwards proportionately to men and call on all governments to work harder to create equal pay in this community.

The YWCA of Canberra has been a leading Employer voice in the campaign to deliver fair and just wages to our staff, and a sector that is highly feminised, underpaid and undervalued. We have been strong supporters of the equal wage case and we are pleased that we have recently seen the decision handed down. While delighted by the outcome in relation to

quantum, we are disappointed by the long implementation phase which will see the actual impact of the decision muted for low paid workers.

As an employer committed to providing fair and just wages to staff, in our recent enterprise agreement negotiations we have worked hard to deliver wages to staff that are above the current award. This is in recognition that the current award is unjust and inadequately values the work of this important sector in the economy. This has been difficult financially and has required significant efficiencies are made in other areas of our business to facilitate.

13. We call on the ACT Government to immediately and fully fund wage increase that flow from the implementation of the wage case for all Government contracts that are held by the community sector. We implore the Government not to disadvantage organisations that have worked to deliver fair and just wages in the implementation of the decision.
14. We encourage the ACT Government to work with their Federal, State and Territory colleagues to ensure uniform implementation of wage increases that flow from the Fair Wage Case.

2.3.2. Supporting a Professional and Well Regulated Sector

The YWCA of Canberra has come together with other local community sector leaders to create the Community Sector Leaders Forum who have in turn developed a specific budget submission that specifically addresses the issues currently facing the sector.

In this submission, the Forum calls on the ACT Government to provide a one off investment to community sector organisations in the order of 15% of the base of contracted services, separate to any investment in enhanced wages, untied and in recognition of the significant and growing requirements placed on the sector. This figure is based on half the figure identified in the Productivity Commission as unfunded work conducted by the community sector on behalf of Governments.

The expectation will be that this is used for:

- Industry assistance, to prepare ACT funded organisations to prepare for the implementation of the Fair Work Australia Decision in the ASU wage case (note that this is separate to financial support required to implement the wage case).
- Training of staff to build the skill level, of both direct service workers and supervisors / managers
- Introduction of stronger evaluation and reporting mechanisms, to ensure evidence based practice, and service delivery that focuses on outcomes and impacts, rather than inputs and outputs.
- Offset the costs of increasing compliance and regulatory systems, including preparatory work for the national regulator, particularly responding to new requirements around the transparency portal and requirements such as the introduction of a standard charter of accounts in 2012.
- Enhanced infrastructure including adequate service accommodation and information technology.
- Offset the actual costs of the portable long service leave.

- Prepare for increases in the superannuation guarantee.

The forum submission clearly outlines the justifications behind this call. It also notes that Forum partners understand the extremely difficult financial restraints on the Territory Budget. However, it is due to concerns about the local economy that this needs to be done now. In a downturn or in difficult economic times it is the ACT Community Sector that is the first industry to be looked at to increase capacity and respond to need.

15. We call on the ACT Government to consider the budget submission submitted by the Community Sector Leaders Forum and its call to increase the base funding of ACT Government contracts by 15%.

16. We seek the ACT Government's consideration of providing a small seeding grant to support the establishment of the Community Sector Leaders Forum.

2.3.3. Realising the potential of the Social Compact between Government and the Community Sector and improving social procurement processes

As noted in our previous submissions, the YWCA of Canberra continues to be a strong supporter of the Social Compact as a mechanism to enshrine the partnership between Government and the community sector.

We welcome the moves in Directorates such as the ACT Community Services Directorate to initiate pre-qualification processes and were please to be granted a pass in the first round of pre-qualification.

There are significant improvements that can be made around the procurement of social services to ensure that we move beyond a 'risk' framework when assessing potential providers to a framework that values innovation, partnership and collaboration. Creating opportunities such as an ability to engage with ACT Government funders in a framework that moves beyond competitive tendering is something that the YWCA of Canberra is keen to engage in.

17. The YWCA of Canberra supports the work occurring around procurement processes for the ACT Community Sector, and recommends the ACT Government move to ten year service agreements.

2.3.4. Streamlining reporting processes and creating an evaluation culture

As noted in previous submissions, the YWCA of Canberra has a large number of funding contracts and grant agreements with the ACT Government to provide services in the community.

The YWCA of Canberra provides a range of financial and written reports as required in our ongoing and one-off contracts. We take this process very seriously and endeavour to meet all deadlines on time with a high standard for reporting.

It has become a challenge however to manage the large number of reporting requirement when there is a range of reporting templates from different government departments. There is a need to streamlining of financial documentation so that the collection of information for reporting and acquitting on one program is the same as all other programs. A standard framework or format for reporting would create efficiencies and hence savings so that the community services dollar will stretch further.

The YWCA of Canberra has been investing heavily in developing an evaluation framework and culture within the Organisation that moves beyond measuring inputs to measuring outcomes and impacts. We are very supportive of the work occurring within the Community Services Directorate around outcomes reporting and look forward to ongoing collaboration in this area to develop systems that are user friendly, robust and manageable within the myriad of responsibilities of community sector agencies.

18. We urge the ACT Government to streamline financial reporting processes and create a standard reporting framework across government.
19. We encourage ACT Government to work together with the community sector in the development of Outcomes Reporting Frameworks and establishing a responsive evaluation framework to measure effectiveness and impact of social programs.

3. Other Priority Areas

3.1. Women leading and influencing

As articulated in our vision, a core reason for the existence of the YWCA is to support women to achieve their potential. It is our belief that the creation of a community where everyone is contributing their talents will result in a better community as a whole.

Despite living in a community where we have a female Governor General, Prime Minister and Chief Minister, we know that women are still locked out of decision making, and that the important roles that many women play within their own community often go unrecognised and under valued.

Over many years, the YWCA of Canberra has aimed to be proactive and active in activities that seek to redress this. We have continued to provide a range of initiatives to support women in Canberra to pursue leadership opportunities. Our leadership program Women Out Front includes a leadership forum, Women on Boards Workshops and Young Women's Leadership Workshops. We provide Board Traineeships as a way for young women to develop skills around Board participation and will shortly launch an On-line Mentoring Program (supported by the ACT Office for Women).

3.1.1. Women's participation in Boards and Committees

We once again congratulate the ACT Government's effort to create equality in the representation on Government Boards, particularly in setting quotas and timelines. The success of the ACT Government in this area is a positive story that should be shared with other Governments and other sectors, as a demonstration of the fact that these initiatives are effective and work.

The last twelve months has demonstrated a growing understanding around the need to increase diversity on boards across all sectors, and we are heartened to see discussion and initiatives undertaken by the ASX and others. We commend the ACT Government's ongoing support of the Australian Institute of Company Directors Scholarship Program, and have seen many women take advantage of such opportunities to expand their skills and knowledge. As the work in this area progresses, we continue to signal our interest in working with ACT Government and other partners on this endeavour.

The ACT Women's Grants Program has been a great initiative to support innovative projects and initiatives, but the limited capacity of the funds means that only small scale and

one-off initiatives can be supported. The Program would benefit greatly from a higher level of resourcing and capacity for the Program to support long-term women's leadership initiatives in the ACT in addition to the small projects possible through the program currently.

20. We call upon the ACT Government to increase the pool of funds available through the ACT Women's Grants Program.
21. We urge ACT Government to invest in more regular data collection around the gender diversity in all sectors of the ACT economy so we can track our progress around greater gender diversity.

3.2. Supporting children and young people to create a better future

As a significant provider of services to children and young people, the YWCA of Canberra works with children and young people across the ACT in every phase of their development. Our services include childcare services from birth to eight years, a number of school care programs and support services to meet the needs of young people and their families.

3.2.1. *The Introduction of a new National Quality Framework for Childcare*

The main focus of Children's Services during 2011 was the introduction of the new National Quality Framework (NQF) effective from January 2012. This new framework is seen as the most significant piece of legislation to be introduced into the industry. Like providers across the ACT, much of our time in 2011 was taken up with preparing, training and discussing the introduction of the NQF. The YWCA of Canberra supports the NQF, in particular the legislation around ratios and staff qualifications, and commends the ACT Government for the introduction of legislation that supports the implementation of the new framework within the ACT.

While we feel that we are in a good position to transition across to the requirements of NQF, we also acknowledge that there will be some challenges ahead in implementing these new regulations. There is a need to support the sector, particularly the not for profit sector in moving to these new standards in a way that ensures that childcare remains affordable and of the highest quality.

The issue of identifying, recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified staff continues to be one of the most challenging elements of the new regime, particularly recognising the low status and remuneration of staff within this sector. There are particular concerns about the ability to identify casual staff that have the qualification requirements.

There is also a need to assess the appropriateness of qualification requirements that are foreshadowed in the school age care sector. The nature of school age care with very short hours and children arriving after structured schooling means that there is a need to re-open discussions around the appropriateness of transferring long day care requirements for carers qualified in early childcare for older children who are accessing formal education through the school system. There are significant opportunities to increase the variety and curriculum in these environments, with opportunities to increase children's physical activity, build on learnings provided in school, and developing programs that look at self esteem, resilience and respectful relationships that may not be best achieved through a standard of workers being drawn from a narrow educational field. We look forward to continuing these discussions with the ACT Government over the next twelve months

There are some particular requirements in the new standards that are particularly challenging for Family Day Care (FDC) providers. The YWCA of Canberra believes a well regulated employer based FDC scheme is a vital form of care provided in the ACT for families wishing to access a home based model of care. We look forward to continuing to engage with the ACT Government to resolve small issues with the current version of the standards, in particular with regard to requirements for outdoor equipment and safety glass.

22. We call upon the ACT Government to support the community based childcare sector as it transitions to the new National Quality Framework for Childcare.
23. We request that the ACT Government continues to engage with providers around implementation issues with the current regulations and work to ensure that these issues can be resolved.
24. We urge the ACT Government to support campaigns to raise the remuneration of early childcare educators working in the childcare sector.

3.2.2. Supporting Sector Leadership for the Childcare Sector

The ACT Education and Care Network, which was the result of the roundtable discussions with the Minister on the impact of the National Quality Framework on Early Childhood Education held during 2011, was established in November last year. The Steering Committee was formed after the Children's Policy and Regulation Unit (CPRU) Director's Meeting in August 2011. The Network incorporates representatives of Early Childhood, School Age Care and Family Day Care. We also hope to have representation from Registered Training Organisations and the ACT Professional Support Coordination Team in the near future. Initial focus will include the development of strong working relationships with related organisations such as Autism Asperger ACT, Belconnen Community Services, Behaviour Support Unit and other bodies representing and advocating for children in the ACT.

The Education and Care Network aims to become a peak body for the industry in the ACT and will advocate and lobby for the sector in order to raise awareness and lift the professionalism of the industry. The Network has developed a governance structure and the YWCA of Canberra is delighted to be supporting the initiative through representation on the Board through this establishment phase.

We would like to acknowledge the strong support of the Government, particularly through ACT Government's Children's Policy and Regulation Unit within the Community Services Directorate during this establishment phase.

25. We seek the ACT Government to consider the provision of a seeding grant to support establishment costs of this new sub sector peak organisation.

3.2.3. After preschool care

In 2009 and 2010 our school aged care program was involved in a pilot project which allowed preschool aged children to attend Turner and Hawker School Aged Care programs. The project has involved working closely with the ACT Government's Children's Policy and Regulation Unit, with the success of the pilot determining its expansion into additional schools in the future.

This pilot project was driven by demand from parents requiring care for children after preschool. The pilots at both Turner and Hawker have been very successful due to the preschool facility being within the school confines. This has allowed the flexibility of including

younger school children in the program to ensure viability. Families have also been extremely happy with the outcomes, with the program supporting them to manage work and family needs more successfully.

The pilot ended at the end of the school year in 2010 with no decision made on whether to continue or extend this project. The reason behind this was the introduction of the new National Quality Framework in January 2012, as it was quite rightly felt that all aspects of childcare would be under review. However, with an amendment to our license at both sites we have been allowed to continue to operate preschool care at both sites and indeed, from February 2012, we are extending preschool care at Turner where we are now offering a full day's care on Wednesday due to the increase in preschool hours of operation. As significant School Age Care providers in Canberra, we continue to work closely with the Children's Policy and Regulation Unit regarding preschool care and we are hopeful of a favourable decision being made in 2012 which will allow us to offer before and after preschool care at more of our SAC programs

26. The YWCA of Canberra recommends that ACT Government continues to enable after preschool care in appropriate school sites in Canberra.

3.2.4. Support for children and young people with special needs accessing school age care programs

As part of our school age care program, the YWCA of Canberra takes the responsibility of providing accessible services very seriously and is proud with its record that the majority of our school age care programs support children with special needs ranging for Autism Asperger to physical and mental incapacity. The care of special needs children is a 1-1 ratio and we access financial support from the National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider, KU Children's Services, who provides some financial support through reimbursement. However, there is a significant gap between the actual cost of this care and the subsidy provided, which means that services who take on care of children and young people with special needs are making a significant financial contribution which is not recognised by governments at either a local or federal level.

The needs of children and young people within our services are significant, and require special skills and training which is difficult to access within the current workforce. Support for staff to access specialist training is a significant need within our service as well as across the sector. As the demand for these specialised services increases, as we have witnessed within our own service in recent years, this is becoming more of an issue.

The experience of young adults who require supervised care after school is an issue that is growing in significant and importance. We have a number of young people (including children as old as 15) who are currently accessing programs designed for much younger children in primary school settings because there is nowhere else for them to go. These settings are inappropriate for the children themselves, create unfair expectations on staff (expecting to provide services to primary school aged children) and create a range of challenges in the management of all children within programs. The provision of appropriate out of school age care for these older children is an issue that requires urgent action.

27. The YWCA of Canberra calls on the ACT Government to provide adequate subsidies to support children with special needs to access mainstream school age care programs.

28. The YWCA of Canberra encourages the ACT Government to work with providers to explore ways of supporting childcare workers to access additional specialist training to support children with special needs who access mainstream school age care programs.
29. The YWCA of Canberra urges the ACT Government to urgently address the issue of providing appropriate care options for children with special needs who are beyond primary school age.

3.2.5. Support for the middle years of school – young people aged 8-12

In our last budget submission the YWCA of Canberra identified the growing need being witnessed for young people aged 8-12, particularly noting the fact that there were significant gaps in service for this age group.

The YWCA of Canberra is responding to this group in a number of ways:

- **Young Women’s Leadership:** We are working collaboratively with our YWCA sisters in Australia to develop a young women’s program - *Every Girl*. This is a program for girls aged 9-14 years and from disadvantaged communities, designed to achieve positive change, enable the development of strong self worth, growth in confidence, and to decrease bullying and stereotypes. Using a strengths-based approach and a human rights framework, this cutting edge program guides girls to create new areas of resilience, and to help them find their voice through civic and community engagement. This program has the potential to foster a generation of women in Australia who have positive wellbeing, are connected to their community and feel empowered to speak up about issues important to them. Our desire is to be able to deliver this program free of charge to schools across Australia.
- **Respectful Relationships:** As noted above, we are also looking to adapt our respectful relationships program to be suitable for the 8-12 year age group. Work has commenced around content design for this program, and we have recently received some funding through the ACT Women’s Grants program to support this project.

With the reforming of the Youth and Family Support Program within the Directorate of Community Services, there are opportunities to ensure that this particular group is better catered for. Building on a strong evidence base, we look forward to building a community of practice in this area, however more work needs to be done to identify opportunities for collaboration and innovation in catering for the needs of young people of this age group.

30. The YWCA of Canberra calls on ACT Government to sponsor a ‘Middle Years’ Symposium that builds on initiatives such as the research Symposium held last year by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People, aimed at exploring the evidence base around best practice working with this group of young people, and as a signalling of a commitment to do more work in this area.

3.2.6. Flexible education options

As noted in previous submissions, the experience of our youth services team is that there are an increasing number of young people disengaged and struggling within mainstream

education programs. The YWCA of Canberra applauds the Government's *Youth Commitment* in committing that no young person will be left behind in regards to their education attainment.

The YWCA of Canberra is very excited to be working with the ACT Education Directorate, local schools in the Lanyon area, and the University of Canberra on a literacy program pilot that aims to use emergent technologies such as e-readers as a way to re-engage with young people struggling with mainstream approaches. This pilot has a strong evaluation component that aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of these approaches. On-going support for programs such as this is increasingly important to ensure the ACT meets its goals under the *Youth Commitment*.

31. We encourage the ACT Government to create opportunities for ongoing support of programs that work to support the *Youth Commitment* and strong educational outcomes for at risk young people.

3.3. Women and their families have access to the conditions and resources they need to lead healthy lives

3.3.1. Community Development Support to at risk communities, particularly around healthy food choices

The YWCA of Canberra is proud and honoured to be welcomed into at risk communities across Canberra. A particular way we support the community is through the distribution of emergency relief programs of both the Australian and ACT Governments. We appreciate the support of the ACT Government in particular when we have moved to use this resource to provide essential goods to the community in new and innovative ways, through initiatives such as the establishment of the Pantry at the Mura Youth and Community Centre which sources much cheaper food for clients. We have also witnessed this approach is creating opportunities to engage with clients about healthier food choices and has resulted in changed spending habits for these clients.

The YWCA of Canberra commends the commitment of ACT Government to look at the issues of concessions and emergency relief and the tasking of the Expert Panel to develop a new ACT Targeted Assistance Strategy. We believe that there are significant opportunities for providers such as ourselves to develop even more innovative programs to support this group of disadvantaged Canberrans.

As noted above, the YWCA of Canberra has been working for many years within the Inner North, and the focus of our community development work in recent years has been targeted around healthy food choices, nutrition and physical activity. Our current program, Getting Healthy in the Inner North, provides support services and programs to tenants living in the public housing in Ainslie, and is supported through the ACT Health Promotions Grants Program. This program is very well supported by clients and by the ACT Health Program and has been supported by ACT Government through various funding programs for over a decade, however it is now only financially secure until July 2012. Withdrawal of support for this program will undermine the Organisation's ability to provide a range of services to this community, including the Emergency Relief Program.

32. We ask the ACT Government to support and resource the recommendations that come out of the ACT Targeted Assistance Strategy.

33. We call on the ACT Government to provide ongoing support for programs proven to be successful when supported through Grants Programs, such as the *Getting Healthy in the Inner North*

3.3.2. Gender Specific Health Services

Along with YWCAs across Australia, the YWCA of Canberra for many years has been providing Encore, a gentle exercise program for women who have undergone breast cancer surgery. This program has been independently evaluated and has been proven to have a significant impact in reducing the incidence and impact of lymphedema.

While we have attempted for many years to attract philanthropic and other funding, our experience locally and nationally is that the vast majority of funds raised around breast cancer go to research rather than to supporting women with the disease. An exception is NSW, where NSW Health has supported for many years a state wide program which sees the program operating in sites across the state. The YWCA of Canberra believes that support for an on-going program in the ACT would also have a significant and positive impact for women in our community.

34. We ask the ACT Government to consider additional support for gender specific health programs that support women impacted by illnesses such as breast cancer

3.3.3. Community Facilities

Like many community services, the YWCA greatly appreciates the support that the ACT Government provides through the provision of community facilities including community and youth centre spaces. Recently there was a policy change by the Community Services Directorate to increase the level of repairs and maintenance that is the responsibility of tenants including community service organisations. This is at a time that we are seeing a reduction in the level of funding provided in programs such as the youth and family support program to support the use of community facilities such as youth centre. This is having a significant impact on the ability of some services to maintain the level of service to community.

There has been significant commentary in recent weeks around the issue of women only pools / women's only facilities at pools. The YWCA of Canberra supports the principle of ensuring all groups have equal access to resources, and is committed to the principle of creating safe spaces for all women. Feedback provided to us is that many women do not feel particularly welcome and safe in the public pool facilities currently available around Canberra. We do believe that these issues should be taken into account when designing new public pools, and that there are significant opportunities for existing and future facilities to be more accessible for women.

35. We request that the ACT Government to consider reversing the policy decision that saw a significant financial burden placed on community organisation tenants occupying ACT Government facilities around general repairs and maintenance.

36. We encourage ACT Government to use the opportunity of the development of a new community pool facility in Gungahlin to design opportunities for increasing access and a feeling of safety and security for all women living in the region (and beyond)

3.3.4. Services and amenities in the Lanyon region

The YWCA of Canberra's work in the Lanyon region, an isolated and growing community is known within the ACT Government.

We commend the ACT Government's recent investment in this region, and in particular the redevelopment and extension of the Mura Lanyon Youth and Community Sector. We also thank the Government for its commitment to modestly increase the resourcing of the community development work that occurs from the centre.