



youth affairs network qld

YANQ 2019/2020

Pre-Budget Submission

On behalf of the Queensland Youth Sector

***Investing in vulnerable young people and
creating a more inclusive Queensland***

December 2018

Introduction

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) welcomes the opportunity to lodge a submission on behalf of the Queensland youth sector and vulnerable young people they work with to the Government's budget process for 2019/2020.

YANQ is the peak body for the youth sector in Queensland representing over 600 individuals and organisations that work with young people in various capacities. This is the largest pool of knowledge where it comes to working with vulnerable young people. YANQ represents this vast knowledge base at policy and advocacy level.

We promote the interests and well-being of young people across the state by:

- [disseminating information to members, the youth sector, and the broader community](#)
- [undertaking campaigns and lobbying](#)
- [making representations to government and other influential bodies](#)
- [resourcing regional and issues-based networks](#)
- [consulting and liaising with members and the field](#)
- [linking with key state and national bodies](#)
- [initiating research projects](#)
- [hosting forums and conferences](#)
- [input into policy development](#)
- [enhancing the professional development of the youth sector](#)

For the past 30 years the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) has actively represented the interests of both young people and youth workers to Government and other stakeholders and sought to share research and to promote and inform the sector about matters of relevance to young people and youth organisations. YANQ has also enabled greater networking and information sharing across different regions in Queensland through innovative programs such as Communities of Practice Leaders Action Networks (CPLANs), along with researching and promoting evidenced, proven approaches to issues of key concern to the youth sector. YANQ's considerable contributions to overall youth sector development is well evidenced by the body of research, reports, etc., generated over the years and which are available on our website at <http://www.yanq.org.au/news--resources.html>

YANQ appreciates that the State finances are of course finite. As such, we have defined specific and more pressing problems for urgent action, which will ensure the sustainability of the youth sector and its capacity to deliver quality services to young people.

However, there will need to be substantial reinvestment in young Queenslanders to offset cuts made in the past 6 years if we are to halt, let alone reverse concerning trends such as the increase in young people (especially young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders) being kept in care or detention, and the number of young people who have disengaged from education and training and who are unemployed. The youth portfolio is the only portfolio that not only has had no increase in funding but actually has sustained significant cuts in recent years. YANQ urges the Queensland Government to be mindful of this neglect in allocating the 2019/2020 state budget.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the State Government reinstates YANQ core operational funding, enabling YANQ to fulfill all its peak body roles.

Recommendation 2: That the State Government provides funding for YANQ to fully operationalise its decentralised policy and sector development model.

Recommendation 3: That the State Government provides ongoing funding for YANQ to stage bi-annual State Youth Affairs Conferences.

Recommendation 4: That the State Government increases funding of the Youth Support Services by 10% per annum for the next five years.

Recommendation 5: That the State Government introduces a Primary Crime Prevention Program in 10 sites across Queensland.

Recommendation 6: That the State Government supports a pilot, community-driven justice reinvestment program in 10 Aboriginal Communities.

YANQ recommendations in detail

Building Capacity of the Youth Sector and its Peak Body

Recommendation 1: That the State Government reinstates YANQ core operational funding, enabling YANQ to fulfill all its peak body roles.

The Queensland Government has committed to social and economic improvements in many areas affecting young people in Queensland. *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities* are the Queensland Government's objectives for the community.

YANQ has particularly focused on responding to the needs of the most marginalised and disadvantaged young people in Queensland – that is, those most likely to be in receipt of youth services. Many of these young people face complex interrelated problems. For example, Murri young people are disproportionately victims of violence, unemployed, disengaged from mainstream schooling, excluded from mainstream society, in relatively poor health and criminalised. Similarly, young people with disabilities often face violence, unemployment, poor educational outcomes, social exclusion and mental health issues. The evidence clearly indicates that a failure to address the complex needs of disadvantaged young people can be expected to result in long term (even multigenerational) costs to the Queensland economy.

Over the years Mission Australia has documented the views of young people on a range of topics. The [Annual Youth Survey 2018](#), has reaffirmed that young people have major concerns including mental health, stress, suicide and violence. Although most of the highly vulnerable young people do not participate in this survey, it is well known amongst youth

workers that the same issues impact on this cohort and in more complex and interrelated ways. The hidden suffering of this group of young people often surfaces indirectly and not enough attention has been placed on supporting this highly vulnerable group in our society.

Effectively addressing government priorities and community needs cannot happen in a siloed way which addresses singular issues; sophisticated strategies which concurrently respond to interrelated problems are essential to effective outcomes. YANQ's historic knowledge, many years of experience and strong community-base places us in a unique position to contribute practice-informed, solution-focused, evidence-based, culturally-appropriate, durable, cost-effective contributions to policy and program development to address these community needs and government priorities. YANQ can play a key role in supporting the State Government to achieve its objectives for community by enabling the inclusion of marginalised young people.

Since 1989, YANQ has been the lead, independent, community-based, youth affairs peak body in Queensland. From our incorporation in 1991 until 2013, YANQ received its core funding through State Government. In January 2013, the LNP government cut funding to YANQ. The reason for the funding cut was to silence the independent advocacy voice of the youth sector. Since then, youth sector expertise on issues affecting young people has been missing from most policy discussions. The effect of this lost contribution is reflected in the minimum input to legislative, strategic and program decisions made over the past 5 years.

YANQ has a proud 30-year history of promoting the interests and wellbeing of young people. We have a sound track record of providing frank and fearless advice to government, which reflects (where necessary) divergent views within the youth sector. Despite loss of core funding, YANQ has continued to provide information, maintain a strong social media presence, undertake small projects, run a State Conference and campaign on a few key issues - all on a shoestring budget. However, this piecemeal approach is not sustainable.

During the 1980's (with a Labor Australian Government) and the 1990's (with a Labor State Government), Queensland led the way nationally in youth sector innovation and delivery of successful youth services. Whilst many of these have ended since the turn of the century, workers with personalised experience of these programs and services were retained in both the government and non-government youth sector and were able to use this experience to inform policy and program development. Under the LNP Government however, the Office for Youth was significantly downsized and many programs and services were defunded or severely rationalised: much of this expertise and knowledge was lost. YANQ is now the sole remaining organisational custodian of this historic wisdom. The quality of policy and program development can only be diminished if this valuable resource is lost.

YANQ's previous research into [Youth Sector Workforce Development](#) and [Murri Youth Sector Development](#) can inform how to attract the right people to work as youth workers, and to retain workers in the sector as long as possible. Without a clear implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation of youth sector development strategies, youth work will be an ad hoc workforce and a stepping stone to other professional work.

Funding of YANQ will ensure a focus on youth sector workforce development that in turn will enhance the quality and reach of youth services provided, therefore value adding to the Government's current and future investments in the youth sector. An investment in YANQ is also the most cost-effective means of ensuring government access to sophisticated, evidence-based, solution-focused, practice-tested advice on issues affecting young people across portfolios. Adequately resourced, YANQ could once again be a critical conduit for information on issues affecting young people throughout Queensland. The Queensland Government has a valuable opportunity to reinvigorate this unique resource and benefit from YANQ's contributions.

YANQ, as the peak body for the youth sector, is in an ideal position to value-add to Queensland Government's existing investment in young people across various portfolios. With funding, YANQ can once again bring all programs funded and supported by the three tiers of Government and private sector under one umbrella. This will allow for implementation of holistic workforce development strategies which would assist the sector to attract new workers with the right qualifications and skill sets, increase retention in the youth sector and provide career opportunities which reduce the likelihood of youth workers migrating to other professions.

Every other State Government in Australia provides funding for their State's youth peak body, and the Queensland situation in the past 5 years is an anomaly which requires urgent rectification.

Recommendation: That the State Government reinstates YANQ core operational funding enabling YANQ to fulfill all its peak body roles.

Cost: \$400,000 per annum, \$2 million over 5 years.

Recommendation 2: That the State Government provides funding for YANQ to fully operationalise its decentralised policy and sector development model.

YANQ is distinguished from many other peak bodies by our decentralised model; the priority we place on regional involvement in all aspects of our decision-making. Prior to 2013, a significant proportion of our limited funds were dedicated to resourcing and supporting a sophisticated regional structure and ensuring that regional participation was integral to all aspects of our work. This enabled members across the State to play an active role in identifying the varying needs of young people and youth workers; engaging in customised locally-relevant training; undertaking local research and consultation; and actively contributing to state-level policy development.

Our innovative model, launched in 2011, is called CPLAN (Communities of Practice Leadership Action Networks). Between 2011 and 2013, YANQ employed 10 *Regional CPLAN Facilitators* throughout Queensland. These were existing youth workers in 10 regions who, with the support of their employer, worked 1 day per month for YANQ. We also appointed an (unpaid) *Co-facilitator* in each region. The Co-facilitator supported the Facilitator, was welcome to

participate equally in state-level meetings, and was ready to take their place should the Facilitator become unable to fulfil their role. The work of CPLAN was integral to YANQ's day-to-day operations and decision-making structures. It provided a unique opportunity for us to undertake *bottom-up*, inclusive, sector-driven policy development. Regional CPLAN groups identified priority regional issues and local workers contribute their ideas. If more than one region had shared interest in a policy area, they could form a Policy Reference Group, which directly contributed to the development of State-level policy.

Regional CPLAN Facilitators and Co-facilitators met 3 times each year at a *State CPLAN Forum*. These meetings provided support, an opportunity to discuss issues, mutual information exchange, background on emerging policy issues, and training.

Since YANQ has been defunded, the CPLAN model has been put on hold although a number of regional CPLANs are still operating in their own right. Reinstating the CPLAN model will go a long way to facilitate a decentralised process for policy and workforce development, providing the necessary support and planning structure in place for youth workers to be actively engaged in sharing their local knowledge and informing policy and program development.

By strengthening YANQ's regional leadership model, not only will we expand regional involvement and decision making on policy and workforce development, we will also harness local and regional resources which otherwise will not be available to YANQ at a state level.

Recommendation: That the State Government provides funding for YANQ to fully operationalise its decentralised policy and sector development model.

Cost: \$100,000 per annum, \$500,000 over five years.

Recommendation 3: That the State Government provides ongoing funding for YANQ to stage bi-annual State Youth Affairs Conferences.

The Queensland State Youth Affairs Conference has been the main event which brings youth workers and youth service managers together from across the state. The conference has been hosted by YANQ since 1992. Due to funding cuts in recent years the conference has not been staged. The last conference was held 21/22 August 2014 in Brisbane.

<http://www.yanq.org.au/2014-conference.html>

Delegates who gather from all regions of Queensland as well as interstate and overseas, share knowledge and explore various issues impacting on young people and the youth sector. The Queensland State Youth Affairs Conference provides an opportunity for professionals and volunteer staff who work with and for young people to explore developments in youth work practice and theory, to share information about programs and activities, to network with other agencies, and to discuss future directions.

Historically, the conferences attract between 200 to 400 participants and were highly regarded by the sector. The conference fulfils a number of functions including exposure of the sector to cutting edge academic research, networking, professional development and building sector unity and camaraderie.

Recommendation: That the State Government provides ongoing funding for YANQ to stage bi-annual State Youth Affairs Conferences.

Cost: \$50,000 bi-annually, \$100,000 over 5 years.

Recommendation 4: That the State Government increases funding of the Youth Support Services by 10% per annum for the next five years.

Funding for youth services was reduced by the LNP government to such an extent that we are in real danger of losing the expertise we have gathered over the past several decades. So much has been lost or diminished that it is difficult to advise where to start in reconstructing a viable sector.

A starting point is to expand the support provided to youth services under the Youth Support Services program. Queensland Government invests approximately \$20.6 million in youth support services across the state. This has been the main funding source for youth services across Queensland for a long time.

Another key component of capacity building, consistently and increasingly flagged by the sector is the need for more support for small to mid-sized organisations, especially the smaller independent associations which generally have substantive service histories and knowledge of local young people and their concerns. It is increasingly difficult for these unique, local or regional non-government services to survive amidst an expanding number of large non-government organisations and private providers and with contracts often “bundled” together to enable program delivery across large regions or for large numbers of recipients by a single provider. This approach disadvantages smaller independent organisations and further erodes localized responses and service delivery for specific groups of young people.

YANQ also notes the increasing trend towards outcomes-based funding and relying on methods such as Results Based Analysis from which to plan and evaluate programs and services with growing concern. See: Keevers, L., Treleaven, L., Sykes, C. & Darcy, M. (2012). *Made to measure: taming practices with results-based accountability*. Organization Studies, 33 (1), 97-120, published by the University of Wollongong and available online through its open access repository.

Youth service providers have consistently informed YANQ that a lack of funding is the main reason they are unable to provide their staff with appropriate supervision, training and other developmental opportunities. This is having a major impact on the quality of service delivered to young people.

Responses to YANQ's [2017 Queensland Youth Sector Survey](#) paint a picture of a sector in crisis. Overwhelmingly, when describing the top five issues impacting youth workers and youth organisations, survey respondents talked extensively about the impact of funding constraints on their capacity to provide quality services to young people, effectively identifying funding policy and models as the key challenge facing the sector.

Survey responses repeatedly identified that services are under-funded and under-resourced to meet the level of service demand (both in terms of intensity of service provision and numerical demand). Funding agreements are overly prescriptive and restrictive, dictating short-term, output-focused service delivery models. As such, services are hamstrung from achieving their full potential to be innovative and respond effectively to the real needs of young people within the context of their individual circumstances.

The most important aspect of youth work is the process of building a trusting relationship between a youth worker and a young person. Vulnerable young people who have lost trust in society in general do not engage and disclose information about their lives to anyone easily. There is a misconception that by having a youth service placed in a community, the young people in most need of support will access them. This is simply not the case and it is here that the sophisticated skill sets of a youth worker comes into play. There are many services established to assist young people but unfortunately the cohort of young people in most need of these services, the ones who have no other opportunity to access support, will not walk in and engage on their own accord.

Traditionally, outreach services also known as 'street work' or 'detached youth work' were the main strategy used by a youth service to engage with young people on the outer margins of society. Once a level of trust and relationship is established between a youth worker and a young person, then there is an opportunity to introduce the young person to various support services.

Thus, it is paramount that youth workers possess the skill sets necessary and that their efforts in building trusting relationships with young people are recognised by the organisations they work for and funding bodies through their contract and reporting mechanisms. Youth workers are in many cases the only significant adults who will have the opportunity to gain the trust of a young person and use this trust to assist them in navigating a path out of the personal and socioeconomic problems they face. YANQ recommends that the increase in funding for youth services is provided in order for all youth services to establish outreach services to engage with young people at a street level. The funding should also be used to up-skill workers where necessary to undertake outreach work and to provide them with ongoing training and supervision necessary to support them in their work.

Recommendation: That the State government increases funding of the Youth Support Services by 10% per annum for the next five years.

Cost: \$2,060,000 per annum, \$10,300,000 over five years.

Recommendation 5: That the State Government introduces a Primary Crime Prevention Program in 10 sites across Queensland.

The Youth and Community Combined Action (YACCA) pilot program in the early 90's demonstrated similar positive outcomes both socially and economically across Queensland. Unfortunately, the program was never evaluated properly and the benefits never communicated more broadly. However, at local level, YACCA as a primary crime prevention program, was well received by communities which led a range of initiatives which tackled the underlying causes of crime.

There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates that primary crime prevention programs not only prevent crime but also save public resources being wasted unnecessarily. ([Crowley, Hill, Kuklinski, and Jones, 2013](#); [Crowley, Jones, Greenberg, Feinberg, and Spoth, 2012](#); [Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyev, and Yavitz, 2010](#); [Klietz, Borduin, and Schaeffer, 2010](#); [Kuklinski, Briney, Hawkins, and Catalano, 2012](#); [Reynolds et al., 2011](#)).

Recommendation: That the State Government introduces a Primary Crime Prevention Program in 10 sites across Queensland.

Cost: \$4,000,000 per annum, \$20,000,000 over five years.

Recommendation 6: That the State Government supports a pilot, community-driven justice reinvestment program in 10 Aboriginal Communities.

The landmark [Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Report](#) by KPMG, released on 27th November 2018 estimates that changes in Bourke, the site of Maranguka Justice Reinvestment, resulted in a gross economic impact of \$3.1 million in 2017. If just half of the results achieved in 2017 are sustained, Bourke could deliver an additional economic impact of \$7 million over the next five years.

Of the \$3.1 million economic impact in 2017, approximately two-thirds relates to the justice system and one third is broader economic impact to the region. This is the first ever report of its kind in Australia, assessing the substantial economic impacts of investing in justice reinvestment and supporting communities to lead the solutions.

Recommendation: That the State Government supports a pilot community-driven justice reinvestment program in 10 Aboriginal communities.

Cost: \$4,000,000 per annum, \$20,000,000 over five years.

Conclusion

The above submission outlines a number of potential budget initiatives that, in our view, could not only provide the necessary support for some of the most vulnerable and

marginalised members of our society, but overtime create savings for the Government in a range of areas including health and the criminal justice system.

For all intents and purposes many young Queenslanders have been forgotten and neglected by their communities and society in general. We urge the Queensland Government to be mindful of the needs of this group in the 2019/2020 budget deliberations. The next State Budget can be a significant turning point for many young Queenslanders that have given up hope and see no exit from difficulties which they face. Together, the Queensland Government and Youth Sector can turn this tide and create a more healthy and just society across Queensland.

The initiatives outlined in the above submission have the potential to contribute significantly to the Queensland Government achieving its objectives for the community as outlined in the *Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities*. On behalf of some of the most marginalised people across Queensland we urge you to consider this submission.