



**youth affairs network qld**

**YANQ 2020/2021**

**Pre-Budget Submission**

***Investing in Queensland's Youth Sector Peak  
body, building the capacity of the Youth Sector,  
improving the lives of vulnerable young people  
and therefore creating a more inclusive  
Queensland***

**October 2019**

## Introduction

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) welcomes the opportunity to lodge a submission on behalf of the Queensland youth sector and the vulnerable young people they work with, to the Government's budget process for 2020/2021.

YANQ is the peak body for the youth sector in Queensland representing over 660 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 31 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>

We appreciate that the State finances are of course finite. As such, we have prioritised for urgent action, funding of YANQ as the state peak body for the youth sector which will focus on ensuring the sustainability of the youth sector and its capacity to deliver quality services to young people.

## 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.

## 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 these surveys, 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.

YANQ can aid in improving government service delivery outcomes through:

- Enabling cross-fertilisation between groups with different exposures (e.g. Aboriginal youth workers associate with workers with non-Indigenous young people, and share ideas).
- Generating policies and programs that genuinely work for diverse population groups.
- Helping workers generate innovative, inclusive models and approaches.
- Testing the viability of strategies and ideas.
- Supporting workers in giving feedback about *on the ground* issues and realities.
- Supporting new workers entering the sector.

In other words, YANQ's work is paramount to the overall professionalism and accountability of both youth work organisations and individual workers. As the peak body for the youth sector we encourage a commitment to cooperation, partnerships and empowerment of communities. We can provide an easy means to test the diversity and cultural appropriateness of strategies, and develop industry-relevant quality frameworks.

YANQ can help encourage democratic participation (particularly amongst highly marginalised and disenfranchised groups) through:

- Helping governments achieve their objectives related to community participation.
- Contributing to quality decision making by policy makers.
- Encouraging community representation and participation.
- Providing easy access to feedback for government.
- Helping governments meet their social justice/equal opportunity obligations.
- Meeting the partnership requirements of government.
- *Taking some of the heat* for government – testing ideas in the community and giving feedback on emerging thinking.
- Providing efficient means to engage users in the design and delivery of services.
- Advocating for those who would otherwise have no voice – promoting social equality and diversity.
- Providing community members with the skills, opportunities and incentives to engage in public life.

In short, YANQ can make a social contribution which far outweighs their financial cost.

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 7 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.

## Conclusion

The above submission outlines three integrated budget initiatives that, in our view, could not only ensure quality 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.

An investment in YANQ is 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.

Funding of Youth Affairs Network of Queensland and its operations as outlined in the above submission has 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.

For further information and/or clarification, please contact:

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