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# Social and Economic Outcomes

# for Young Australians

# in a COVID-Normal World

# Federal Budget Proposal

# and for The Honourable Alan Tudge MP,

# Minister for Education and Youth

# 27 January 2021

## Introduction

**1.1 This Proposal**

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) has prepared this proposal for the Treasurer and the Minister for Education and Youth. This follows ongoing discussions with the Federal Government during 2020 regarding AYAC’s activities in supporting young people’s needs and contributions in recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This proposal outlines the recent work of the organisation and the proposed scope of activities for 2021/22 and beyond. It also outlines a broader vision for AYAC, including financial support, to sustain the organisation’s critical core work as the national youth peak into the future.

The AYAC Board has worked closely with the youth sector and young people through the COVID-19 pandemic, and all have provided resounding endorsement of the role AYAC plays in national sector and policy coordination. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic - there is a shared view that there has never been a more important time for AYAC’s work.

The support of the sector includes significant technical and some financial contributions to assist AYAC to continue this work. The sector is investing in the history, reputation and demonstrated coordination role that AYAC has played in the current context.

We are also seeking government investment in this work.

AYAC seeks to undertake this work in partnership with the Minister for Education and Youth, to develop and sustain the required structures for providing a direct voice for young people into the Federal Government and the Federal Cabinet and Ministry, and access to the extensive professional knowledge and expertise of the youth sector.

## 1.2 About the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC)

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) is **the national peak body representing young people** and the services that work with them. With our broad networks across Australia’s diverse youth sector, with young people and youth-led organisations, we work to:

* Represent the issues and interests of young people, and the sector that supports them, at the national level,
* Facilitate and lead coordination and cooperation within and across the youth sector,
* Provide policy advice to government and other organisations on issues that affect young people and the youth sector,
* Support best practice in youth participation, and
* Promote the health, social and economic well-being of young Australians

**AYAC’s vision** is for an Australia in which young people are informed, empowered, and supported to participate in their communities. This includes ensuring that:

* Young people who experience disadvantage can access programs, services, advice and support to reach their full potential.
* Young people participate freely in public debate, decision making and political process, and are supported to do so, creating the change they want to see in Australia.
* Young people are supported by a vibrant and well-resourced youth support sector that delivers relevant and meaningful programs and opportunities across Australia.
* The Australian youth sector is recognised as leading the way in innovative and effective youth engagement and participation strategies, including in responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.
* The Australian community values and welcomes the ideas, opinions and experiences of young people in all aspects of community life.

As the national youth peak body for 4.3 million young people aged 12-25, there is no other organisation performing this role. We remain committed to:

* Ensuring the views and interests of young Australians are heard and addressed in national public policy,
* Coordinating national policy work for immediate and long-term action on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, including informing government’s response to,
* Providing youth-informed policy advice to government and the non-government sector,
* Supporting policy makers to consult and engage with young people, and
* Ensuring that young people are placed at the centre of Australia’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**1.3 Background: AYAC’s recent work (including the *Share, Coordinate, Shape* project)**

***COVID-19 Youth Sector Coordination and Advocacy***

Since the emergence of COVID-19 in early 2020, AYAC has been listening to the voices of young people and to the organisations who support young people, to coordinate an informed programmatic and policy response to COVID-19. This is a critical function, not performed by any other organisation.

Under the banner of *Share, Coordinate, Shape*, AYAC convened a national youth sector meeting in early April 2020 to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on Australia’s young people. This current public health crisis continues to impact on every one of us, but more particularly those who are more disadvantaged. We know that it is having and will continue to have a significant impact on Australia’s young people, with critical and long-term economic, social and personal implications.

Over 55 representatives of concerned member organisations attended this meeting. It was an important opportunity for the Australian youth sector to share information, coordinate messages and consider how to shape advocacy with the government for immediate and more long-term action. A key outcome of the meeting was a coordinated strategy to support and build upon existing policy and advocacy work​. Two examples of this work are *Sector Briefing Paper* and *Federal Budget Response* (see Appendix 1).

Crowd funding from the sector established a baseline of financial contributions to support this work, and enabled AYAC to undertake work to:

* Establish an evidence base for impacts and solutions,
* Build a deeper understanding of the key issues to be addressed; and
* Develop and share the critical key recommendations for support and recovery for young people with government, the youth sector and other key stakeholders.

This work has continued and has been used by the sector and policy makers to inform advocacy and policy development and support and influence key decisions during 2020 and into 2021.

This work has been shared through our networks and has presented recommendations for ensuring young people are central to the Government's response to COVID-19; highlighting some of the key impacts of COVID-19 on young people; and building for the necessary steps for longer-term social and economic recovery.

1. **Proposal**

**2.1 National Youth Policy Project (already funded)**

In late 2020, AYAC received funding by the Federal Government under the **Youth Advocacy Support Grant Scheme** to establish and implement a **National Youth Policy Project**. This funding demonstrated an important commitment to partnership with the youth sector which will undertake this important work.

The current funding ($150,000) will support the work until July 2021.

**2.2 Proposed Funding for National Youth Peak for 2021/22-2023/4**

This proposal seeks multi-year funding to continue and expand on this important work, and ensure that the Federal Government’s ongoing engagement with young people and the youth sector is cohesive, inclusive and expertly delivered.

**Specifically, AYAC proposes $555,000 p.a. for three years (total $1.72 million with CPI) to:**

* **Provide cohesion, coordination and expertise as the National Youth Peak Body**
* **Continue to support the structures established under the National Youth Policy Project**
* **Deliver:**

1. **Annual National Youth Conversations and National Roundtable**
2. **Evidence for Policy**
3. **Stakeholder Engagement and Support**

This investment in the youth sector by the Federal Government will be a vital strategy in setting strong policy to support and empower young people as they strive to recover from the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as address the many challenges and opportunities that exist for young people even in the best of times.

The final three elements address gaps that existed before the establishment of the National Youth Policy Project and will build on existing work with young people, the sector and Government (activities, resources, partnerships and structures). The work will utilise new and existing coordinated structures and materials, including extensive and evolved networks that connect young people with professional youth services and the communities in which they live.

AYAC seeks to undertake this work in partnership with the Minister for Education and Youth, developing and sustaining the required structures for providing a direct voice for young people into the Federal Government and the Federal Cabinet and Ministry, and access to the extensive professional knowledge and expertise of the youth sector.

Given the critical and diverse challenges facing young people today, the work will also aim to support effective engagement across key Ministerial Portfolios and Departments including: Treasury, Health, Education, Employment, Communications, Industry, Environment and Families and Social Services.

**2.3 Current Federal Government Commitments**

This work would build and support the recent work of the Federal Government, including:

* The National Youth Policy Framework
* Australia Youth Development Index 2020
* National Action Plan on the Health of Children and Young People
* Job Maker Hiring Credit
* Youth Employment Package and Strategy - Department of Education, Skills & Employment
* Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program (AAIP) soon to be replaced with the Incentives for Australian Apprenticeships (IAA)
* Improving Design of Youth Allowance (Services Australia)

**2.4 Annual National Youth Conversations and National Roundtable**

Young people’s needs and capabilities, and the circumstances affecting their lives, are continually evolving, so it is critical to facilitate ongoing engagement between policy / decision makers and young people.

1. Each year, AYAC will coordinate with its members and other youth sector stakeholders to develop and execute a series of **National Conversations** to ensure that young people’s voices and views are heard and drive the development of policy and solutions in responding to the issues that affect their lives, especially recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This will also bring together existing consultation work by national and state level organisations, and young people who are developing ideas and proposals for building a better future such as those emerging from the webinar *Young People Reimagining the Future* organised by the YMCA and the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) in 2020.

The National Conversations would be designed and facilitated by young people, with a methodology developed to ensure national consistency.

1. The National Conversations will culminate in a **National Roundtable**, led by young people, at which representatives of industry and government will engage with a representative group of young people about the key findings and proposals for reform and recovery from the National Conversations.
2. This work will be informed and supported by a **Working Group** that includes state and territory youth peak organisations, the National Youth Advocacy Network, and other key national youth organisations and youth-led organisations (See Appendix 2). It will build on the consultations undertaken for the 2020 Australian Youth Development Index (AYDI), the consultations undertaken by the Youth Taskforce in preparing for the development of a national youth policy, and the initial work of the National Youth Policy Project during the first half of 2021.

**To implement and establish the Annual National Youth Conversations and National Roundtable,** AYAC is seeking the annual sum of **$301,000 / year** - to coordinate and resource this work; fund collaboration with each state and territory and other organisations; run the youth-led conversations including at a local level; provide training for youth facilitators and analysts; and run the National Roundtable.

**2.4 Evidence for Policy**

Significant numbers of research projects, consultations and other data/evidence gathering work are conducted in relation to young people every year. There is a need to gather and synthesise this evidence on a regular basis, as a key input to policy making at the Federal level.

1. AYAC will collect, synthesise and analyse the best available data and evidence, including the voices and views of young people, to inform the development of the ongoing policy responses to COVID-19 and more broadly youth issues at the national level. Data will be sourced through AYAC’s networks in the youth sector and academia (see Appendix 2). This work will build on the work of the Federal Government’s Youth Taskforce, the Australian Youth Development Index and the initial work of the **National Youth Policy Project**.
2. AYAC will use this research and evidence to develop and inform key **National Policy Recommendations** in areas such as: education and vocational training, employment and welfare and training support, health and wellbeing (including mental health), communications and transport infrastructure; and social, industry and environmental innovation and sustainability.
3. This work will produce clear policy papers with support from AYAC’s **Policy Advisory Working Group** comprising representatives from key academic institutions, youth sector and others with policy expertise. It will also inform and be informed by the National Conversations and Roundtable (2.3 above).

**To collect, synthesis and analyse evidence and develop policy recommendations,** AYAC is seeking **$127,000 \* / year** - for a Policy Officer.

**2.5 Stakeholder Engagement and Support**

Issues and opportunities that affect young people’s lives sit across multiple government portfolios, and in other key parts of the economy and society. As well as bringing the networks, expertise and evidence of young people and the youth sector to the Federal Government, AYAC can actively support the Minister and DESE to engage and inform key policy makers and decision makers on youth matters.

1. AYAC will **engage with government policy makers and other key decision makers**, using evidence, policy recommendations, and perspectives of young people to inform ongoing national policy and programs for young people.
2. This work will require significant **engagement and coordination with the youth sector and other stakeholders**, including young people, who will participate and contribute to AYAC’s work as detailed above.

**To undertake engagement on youth issues with key policy makers and decision makers,** AYAC is seeking **$127,000 \* / year** - for a National Engagement Officer.

\* Includes on-costs (super etc) and overhead (office, devices, etc)

1. **AYAC Governance and Capability to deliver**

AYAC was established in 2002 and is incorporated under the ACT Associations Incorporations Act (1992). It is governed by a constitution and a Board of Directors. The Board includes representatives from state and territory youth peaks, the youth sector and young people from across Australia.

AYAC has extensive expertise to deliver on this project. As outlined earlier in this proposal, we have broad networks throughout Australia’s diverse youth sector, youth-led organisations and directly with young people. We have a strong history of developing evidence-based policy responses and partnering with the Federal Government to achieve positive outcomes for young people. We are recognised as an impartial convenor and coordinator that does not give preference to any particular policies, interests or services.

This is evidenced through our recent work engaging with the broad youth sector, coordinating a national response to COVID-19 and securing technical and financial contributions from the sector to continue this work. The sector recognises AYAC’s history, reputation and demonstrated coordination role – the only independent, national voice delivering work not provided elsewhere.

AYAC received no funding from the Federal Government for the period from 2014 to 2020. Despite its unfunded status, AYAC continued to operate with the support of its members and supporters, including the volunteer Board of Directors.

The AYAC Board will continue to provide governance and accountability for this Project.

1. **Timeframes**

This proposal will allow AYAC to continue and build on work, currently funded via the National Youth Policy Project which will end in July 2021, that is vital for wellbeing, employment and other outcomes for young Australians, especially in light of the challenges related to COVID-19.

It is intended that the work will be undertaken in parallel, and be flexible to take advantage of and adapt to address policy opportunities and concerns as they emerge.

Thus, the work can be iterative, capable of revision, refinement and adaptation as required. An independent review could be undertaken in the third year of the contract to assess outcomes and advise on further developments. Such an evaluation should be planned now but would require additional funding.

1. **Indicative Budget**

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|  | **Cost p.a. (ex GST)** | **Cost over 3 years**  **(incl. 3% CPI p.a.)** |
| **National Conversations and Roundtable** |  |  |
| - Convening and logistics | $80,000 |  |
| - State and territory input (8 x $10 000) | $80,000 |  |
| - Youth facilitation / participation / analysis | $80,000 |  |
| - Project Support Officer (0.6) \* | $61,000 |  |
| **Sub-total** | **$301,000** | **$930,361** |
| **National Policy Officer \*** | **$127,000** | **$392,544** |
| **National Engagement Officer \*** | **$127,000** | **$392,544** |
| **TOTAL** | **$555,000** | **$1,715,450** |

\* Includes on-costs (super etc) and overhead (office, devices, etc)

Additional activities, including evaluation, would require separate costing and development.

1. **AYAC Contact Details**

**Co-Chairs**

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**Appendix 1**

***Sector Briefing Paper***

“COVID-19 is and will continue to detrimentally impact Australia’s young people. But young people can also offer practical solutions to our economic recovery and long-term wellbeing in Australia. Investing in young people now will ensure our economic and social fabric is the strongest it can be leading into the future.

We call for action to mitigate the reality of significant and prolonged youth unemployment due to the COVID-19 crisis, and the damaging flow-on effects such as mental ill health and homelessness. Specifically, we call for investment:

* to implement or scale existing recommended solutions;
* in demand-side strategies such as job creation through infrastructure projects and industry partnerships; and
* in collaboration with young people, to develop innovative new approaches.

As a coalition of committed organisations and individuals working for better outcomes for young people, AYAC calls for the Australian Government to guarantee that young people will be a priority focus of our economic recovery in response to COVID-19. To this end, we call for a focus on young people in the ongoing work of the National Covid-19 Coordination Commission - as the Commission coordinates advice to the Australian Government on actions to anticipate and mitigate the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

## *AYAC Post 2020 Budget Response*

“The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) welcomes the 2020-21 Federal Budget’s recognition of the importance of young people for our economic recovery. AYAC calls on the Australian Government to ensure that young people continue to be a priority focus in the ongoing planning for the future. Young people have already been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. By listening to them and supporting them, they will help to secure Australia’s long-term social and economic wellbeing.

The 2020-21 Federal Budget’s targeted investment into youth employment measures recognises the unique vulnerability of young people post COVID-19. However, AYAC cautions that these measures, while offering a possible crisis response for some young people, are only the first step toward securing the long-term economic security of all young people.

AYAC looks forward to working with the government, young people and the youth sector to monitor the effectiveness of this budget, review the impact of these targeted measures on youth employment and other outcomes and invest in ongoing planning for young people’s contributions.

We want to be sure that these budget measures will create pathways to meaningful ongoing jobs for young people that enable them to meet their basic living needs and build their independence and their futures The Brief has been used to raise awareness and draw together resources to support the development of an AYAC Youth Sector COVID-19 Recovery Advocacy Strategy and Work Plan.”

*Each full paper available on request.*

**Appendix 2**

Consulting Partners for the proposed work have included UNICEF Australia, Foundation for Young Australians, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, CREATE, Youth-led organisations such as Jasiri, and the State / Territory Youth Peaks.

Some of our Research Stakeholders include UNICEF, *headspace*, YMCA, CREATE Foundation, Youth Development Australia, Youth Law Australia, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of Australia, Mission Australia, Western Sydney University, along with the State / Territory Youth Peaks.

Policy Partners include Australian Catholic University (Institute of Child Protection Studies), Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University, RMIT University, Edith Cowan University, policy think tanks and the State / Territory Youth Peaks.

Engagement stakeholders include UNICEF Australia, Koori Youth Council, Youth Disability Advocacy Service, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, CREATE and the State / Territory Youth Peaks.