

Baird Government response to YFoundations pre-election submission

Safety and stability

Like YFoundations, the Baird Government shares the vision of preventing and eliminating youth homelessness.

The Liberal & Nationals Government has committed \$27 million over three years to youth homelessness, through the Homelessness Youth Assistance Program, to support unaccompanied children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The program will provide individualised supports linked to accommodation with the aim of reunifying children with their families and broader support networks or to enable them to transition to independence.

More broadly, we are dedicated to preventing homelessness, and repeat homelessness, across our community. The Liberal National Government has introduced Going Home Staying Home (GSH), which is delivering better services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The GSH reforms mean more money and better homelessness services delivered to the areas of greatest need. Over the next three years, the NSW Government will invest a record half a billion dollars to better prevent and address homelessness in NSW.

Under GSH, 157 new services have been established to assist more than more than 52,000 people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. More than 17,000 people women and children (an increase of more than 13%) are being supported under GSH, while 15,000 young people (an increase of almost 3%) are accessing services.

There are 23 of the new packages are for women only, with or without children. Of those 19 are for women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence. Approximately 60 new packages have a discrete specialist response for women, especially women experiencing domestic and family violence, along with responses for other client groups.

The NSW Government welcomes the Federal Government's commitment to extend the National Partnership on Homelessness (NPAH) for an additional two years through until 2017. The NSW Government has made numerous representations to the Federal Government in recent months to secure such an agreement and will continue to work closely with the sector to ensure money is used effectively to help those most in need. The NSW Government supports the Federal Government's priorities for the forthcoming NPAH arrangements of assisting young people, as well as those escaping domestic violence.

Previously, the Liberal & Nationals Government secured an agreement with the Federal Government on the 2014-15 NSW implementation plan for NPAH. This current agreement will enable specialist homelessness services in NSW to receive almost 10 per cent more funding under NPAH and will support the roll out of \$86 million across NSW in 2014-15 to help homelessness service providers consolidate the recent GSH reforms of specialist homelessness services in NSW.

As the YFoundation submission notes, effective contract management is an important part of ensuring that young people, and vulnerable communities, receive the support they need and

deserve. To this end, the NSW Government reform Early Intervention and Intensive Services. The NSW Government has already advised all Targeted Early Intervention Program service providers that current programs will be undergoing reform to ensure they better address the safety, welfare and wellbeing of vulnerable children, young people and families. To give providers certainty, funding for all providers was extended from 2014 until 30 June 2016.

Connections

The Liberal & Nationals Government recently held the first meeting of the Premier's Council on Homelessness for 2015 which provides advice on a whole of government approach to homelessness. The meeting of the Premier's Council discussed the Going Home Staying Home (GHS) reforms and social impact investing, while also hearing from those with lived experience of homelessness.

The social investment discussion focussed on the NSW Governments recent announcement about Social Impact Investment Policy. Under the Policy, the NSW Government is exploring opportunities to bring together expertise from the government, non-government and private sectors to tackle social challenges like youth homelessness. The NSW Government has committed to creating two new social investment opportunities per year under the Policy and will work closely with the sector to ensure the priority area of youth homelessness is well targeted at those most in need.

The Government also supports The Collective which is an innovative way of connecting people within communities and more broadly government with business to address social disadvantage. The Collective has been successful in its efforts as a point of community activity and collaboration, helping to organise various groups, including those specific to young people, which include the Young Bloke Group and YUM Group.

The Government appointed the inaugural NSW Advocate for Children and Young People on 9 January 2015. The Advocate is a statutory office which replaced the Commission for Children and Young People, following community consultations in 2013. The Advocate is responsible for developing, in consultation with Government and the wider community, a three year strategic plan which will guide the office's priorities.

The Liberal & Nationals Government has also announced Youth Frontiers, a \$3 million state wide youth mentoring program which will empower over 1,200 disengaged students in years 8 and 9 in all 93 NSW Electorates. Every student will be paired with an individual mentor, and together they will work through a 30 hour mentoring program, which includes the completion of a community project.

Home and place

As you may be aware, the Baird Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to develop, if re-elected, a dedicated fund to facilitate up to \$1 billion in new social and affordable housing stock to support vulnerable households. The MOU with Infrastructure Partnerships Australia (IPA) and the Council of Social Services of New South Wales (NCOSS) is an historic agreement between the Government and key social and infrastructure peak bodies.

The NSW Liberal & Nationals Government has also released Social Housing in NSW; a discussion paper for input and comment, which invited public feedback on the future of the social housing system. The discussion paper talks about how we can create better and stronger social housing communities. The discussion paper focuses on supporting vulnerable people in social housing, creating more opportunities for tenants, while also making the system fairer for those in need. It is structured around three key pillars;

- A social housing system that provides opportunity and pathways to client independence
- A social housing system that is fair
- A social housing system that is sustainable

Health and wellness

In relation to health service delivery for young people, the Government is guided by the NSW Youth Health Policy 2011-2016 healthy bodies, healthy minds, vibrant futures. Each Local Health District and Speciality Health Network is responsible for implementation of the policy. Young people access health care through a range of NSW health services, including sexual health and drug and alcohol services, hospitals and dedicated youth health services. There are nine NSW Health funded youth health services in NSW, located in six LHDs, targeting the most vulnerable young people.

Education and employment

NSW was the first state to sign up to the Gonski Agreement, which delivers an additional \$5 billion to NSW schools. Already, NSW public schools have started to see the benefits with an additional \$197 million invested in 2014 and 2015 directly into the classroom to assist students needing extra help.

This year, the Baird Government is providing record state funding for school education, 16 per cent more than in 2010–2011. The Baird Government has also funded strategies to lift the results of students from rural and remote NSW and helped to improve the quality of teachers in the classroom – the factor known to have the greatest impact on student performance.

A re-elected Baird Government will deliver up to 1,600 new or refurbished future focused classrooms from *Rebuilding NSW* funds. Additionally, schools across NSW will benefit from a \$224 million investment to improve the quality of teaching in public primary schools and more school counsellors and additional funding as part of the Baird Government's \$167 million Supported Students, Successful Students initiative.

The Baird Government has created more than 136,000 new jobs over the last four years and wants to ensure every young person in NSW has the skills they need to take up the opportunities that are out there in the fastest growing economy in the country. A re-elected Baird Government will introduce a range of new policy initiatives to improve access to vocational education and training, including:

- \$48 million for fee-free scholarships for 200,000 concession-eligible 15-30 year olds to undertake government-subsidised vocational education and training certificate courses, with priority given to concession eligible social housing residents;
- \$25 million for the Jobs of Tomorrow Scholarship Fund which will offer 25,000 scholarships worth \$1,000 each to encourage more vocational education and training students to undertake qualifications in technology-based growth industries; and
- \$27 million for workplace learning for over 40,000 government school students each year who enrol in a vocational education and training course as part of their HSC.

Currently, the Youth Scholarship Program is offered to students waiting for, or living in, social housing or crisis accommodation to assist with the purchase of educational items, with the aim of increasing the number of students in this group who attain the HSC. The Program provides a one-off payment of \$2,000 to successful applicants. The Department of Family and Community Services is offering 200 scholarships in 2015.

Thank you for taking the time to outline the Yfoundations key issues for the upcoming NSW State Election.