

YWCA NSW Submission to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee

The YWCA is one of the largest NGOs in the world working in 132 countries across thousands of communities to support 25 million people experiencing vulnerable times. YWCA NSW supports people at critical and vulnerable times, developing their life skills and connectedness so that they can be confident, happy and contributing individuals. Our mission is to develop resilient, connected people engaged in their community. YWCA NSW currently delivers a suite of more than 50 programs to meet the needs of over 15,000 across approximately 90 communities.

A model for a collaborative approach to service delivery

YWCA NSW recognises that in order to respond to the complex needs and issues in the community a collaborative approach to service delivery is essential. Since 2004 YWCA NSW has been implementing a strategy for social service delivery that focuses on collaboration with communities and service providers. The purpose is to ensure that services are coordinated, effectively targeted and achieve optimum results, with the overall aim of increasing social inclusion.

The strategy called 'Y It Takes A Village' (YITAV), was designed following an extensive period of research undertaken by YWCA NSW in 2003. Leaders of more than seventy government departments, non-government and community organisations were interviewed to determine how they saw the needs of Australian families and where they were focusing their energies and resources.

The YITAV approach

The YITAV approach seeks to:

- Coordinate service provision across the community in response to community needs.
- Identify gaps in service provision and ensure that those gaps are filled.
- Ensure that duplication in service provision is not occurring.
- Lead the breakdown between service provision silos so that a mix of resources can be applied to address complex needs. That is, YWCA NSW works to bring service providers together to ensure that the best combination of support can be offered to any single individual.
- Consult and engage the community in program development.

From our experience in working closely with government departments, and through employing the YITAV strategy in the community YWCA NSW believes that there are

aspects of this approach which can be applied to collaborative working within and between many organisations.

Through our discussions with government we know there are many attempts in joining services together, however we also know this has had varying success. We believe that there is potential to involve an external body, or third party in coordinating collaborative working across government. In recent years the UK government has introduced 'Children's Services', a kind of 'pseudo department', funded separately, which brings together elements of the Departments for education, health, culture, social care and justice to ensure that the best outcomes for children and young people are delivered across government. This means that the organisations involved with providing services to children - from hospitals and schools, to police and voluntary groups - will be teaming up in new ways, sharing information and working together, to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life. The autonomy of each department is maintained, and the expertise of the departments is harnessed according to the issue at hand. Each department has a clear and defined role and the Director of Children's services at local government level works to coordinate these roles to meet the needs of that area. This is a relatively new initiative. For more information you may find it useful to look at the 'Every Child Matters' website which explains and illustrates the framework which supports this 'joining up' of children's services – health, education, social care and so. The website address is www.everychildmatters.gov.uk; I'd also be happy to discuss this concept in more detail.