

YUWKES!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA INC.

Reversing the drift

By Janet Jukes

YACVic recently held a solutions summit in Shepparton called *Reversing the Drift* on May 9 and 10. Around 350 young people and workers with young people attended over the two days.

We chose the name, *Reversing the Drift*, because our state-wide consultations last year impressed upon us that many young people are leaving country Victoria in search of greater opportunities in the major cities and that this is having a devastating effect on local communities. Many feel socially isolated and say they are forced to leave because of the lack of employment and recreational opportunities and because they feel that there is simply no place for them in their communities. In many communities young people have no other choice than to leave.

Too often young people are seen as the problem rather than part of the solution. So rather than focussing on the problems the aim of *Reversing the Drift* was to highlight the myriad of innovative solutions already put in place out on the ground, across the state. And I think we succeeded. The summit showcased over 50 projects and services throughout Victoria that are working to develop community identity, celebrate diversity, enhance social connectedness, promote community capacity building and foster rural renewal. We had a overwhelmingly positive response from the summit with one of the main gripes being that there were too many choices for presentations and workshops at one time!

This summit comes at a time in which workers with young people in country Victoria are increasingly operating in isolation, in an environment where resources are often limited and funding insufficient, short term or uncertain. A lack of a coordinated approach to resource distribution by state and federal government and the lack of consideration of local needs seriously hampers the ability of service agencies to adequately address the needs of young people in rural and regional Victoria. The



Peter Kirby addressing the summit

Rural Life of Us, a report published by YACVic and the Centre for Adolescent Health which was launched at *Reversing the Drift*, looks at these kinds of issues in more detail (see page 6 for an overview of this report).

By bringing together young people, workers with young people, local community leaders and government representatives, we hope that this summit provided an important step in addressing some of the issues facing young people in country Victoria.

No gathering of this size takes place in a vacuum and I would like to thank the efforts of the summit reference committee: Liz Davies; Rowena Allen; Bek Saltmarsh; Richard Hill; Paula Grogan; Jennifer Hippiusley; Samira Mohamed; Christine Harrison and Alex Markham. The amazing commitment of Michelle Blanchard, Paul Van Holsteyn and Lise Dalla Torre from the YACVic Youth Reference Group rates a special mention as

do the many young people who assisted in facilitating workshop sessions.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank our generous sponsors without whom YACVic would not have been able to provide all of the free registrations for young people or the low registration fees and concessions for the rest of us. In particular I'd like to thank VicHealth, Goulburn Murray Local Learning and Employment Network and the Goulburn Regional Youth Committee. Special thanks also go to Rotary clubs and Regional Youth Committees across Victoria for sponsoring young people to attend this event.

Finally I'd like to acknowledge the commitment of the young people and workers who came and presented their solutions to the summit. The range and diversity of presentations was a key factor in the success of the summit.

A report on *Reversing the Drift* will be released shortly. In the mean time turn to page 4 to read about the major themes and highlights of the summit.

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VICTORIA'S LEADING POLICY ADVOCATE ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S ISSUES

news in brief

About YACVIC

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc. (YACVic) is the peak body and leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria. YACVic's vision is for a Victorian Community that values and provides opportunity, participation, justice and equity for all young people.

The main function of YACVic is to make representations to government and serve as an advocate for the interests of young people, workers with young people and organisations that provide direct services to young people. YACVic's resources are primarily directed towards policy analysis and development through consultation with its constituency. YACVic also resources the information needs of its members through regular updates and by facilitating networking within and beyond the Victorian youth sector.

YACVic is governed by a volunteer Board and managed by a paid secretariat. The Council's core funding comes from the Victorian Government's Office for Youth.

Vision statement

Our vision is for a Victorian Community that values and provides opportunity, participation, justice and equity for all young people.

YACVic actively works towards this vision as the peak body and leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria.

Yikes!

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Contributions

Contributions to Yikes! are welcome. Please note our copy deadlines on the back page.

Inserts & Advertising

If you wish to include an insert or advert in Yikes please contact the YACVic Communications Officer on (03) 9612 8999 or email info@yacvic.org.au

YIKES! goes to air on SYN FM

Look out! The YACVic Youth Reference Group (YRG) are hitting the airwaves from June 5 with their current affairs show YIKES!

What are the issues affecting young people in your community? And more importantly what is being done to tackle these issues? The YRG will be asking the hard questions each Wednesday from 5pm to 6pm on SYN FM.

Over four programmes the YRG will be discussing issues such as young people in the media, dealing with problems at school, bullying and how to deal with it and positive ways to chill out and relax.

Yikes... we're on SYN FM!

Tune in to 90.7 FM each Wednesday in June.

Australian Youth Affairs Coalition: Birth of a National Youth Peak

On 16th and 17th May 2002 young people, state youth peak organisations, national youth organisations and other people interested in youth affairs met in Canberra for the inaugural annual general meeting of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC).

AYAC is an incorporated not for profit, non government association that aims to:

- Represent the rights and interests of young people at a national and international level
- Promote the well-being of young Australians
- Promote the participation of all young people in Australian society
- Provide policy advice to government and the broader community on issues affecting young people and the youth affairs field.

As well as electing a national representative council, the two day meeting, which was open to members of the organisation, discussed key policy issues that affect young people in Australia, key alliances and partnerships that can be developed to advance young peoples interests and ways to strengthen the voices of young people in national policy discussions.

Members of the National Representative Council will meet with the Federal Minister for Youth Affairs, the

Hon Larry Anthony, to discuss the new peak body, the issues raised over the course of the two days, and to seek government support for its operation.

Meetings are also planned with opposition and minor party youth spokespeople and key government departments.

For further information contact:

Samantha Tyler (Young Spokesperson) 0409 158 391

Jamie Crosby (Independent Chairperson) 0411 443 190

Janet Jukes (Treasurer) (03) 9612 8999

Youth Poll 2002

Each year the Australian Democrats ask young Australians between 15 to 20 years of age their views on a range of issues. The questions asked range from issues of employment and education through to the republic and reconciliation. The survey form is available on the Democrats website at <http://www.democrats.org.au>.

Update on the Inquiry into Volatile Substance Inhalation

The final report of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's Inquiry into Volatile Substance Inhalation is due to be handed to Parliament on the 13th June 2002. The report will be publicly available shortly afterwards. For further information contact the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee on 9651 3546.

Grants and funding

New philanthropic body

Recently established philanthropic organisation Social Ventures Australia (SVA), aims to source innovative solutions to many of Australia's entrenched community problems. SVA is the result of the pooled resources of The AMP Foundation, The Benevolent Society, The Smith Family and WorkVentures. They are calling for application to their "Big Boost" round of funding. See their website for more info:

<http://www.socialventures.com.au>

SPRINGBOARD GRANTS

The Foundation for Young Australians is calling for expressions of interest for the funding of initiatives that create opportunities for young people aged between 12 and 25.

YACVic membership renewal reminder

It's that time of year again! YACVic memberships are due for renewal at the end of each financial year. Fill out the membership form on page 11 and send it in with your payment so that you will continue to receive this funky little newsletter plus support the best youth policy and advocacy organisation around!

Springboard Grants are for projects that enhance the self esteem of young people, break entrenched cycles or improve the "connectedness" of young people to their family, peers, schools and communities.

One of The Foundation's core principles is to involve young people in the design, implementation, management and evaluation of initiatives that address their needs. Grants of up to \$100,000 over three years are available.

Organisations interested in submitting an expression of interest should download the guidelines and application form from www.youngaustralians.org or phone 1 800 252 316. Applications close 24 June 2002.

Web: <http://www.youngaustralians.org>

Indigenous Leadership Forum

The Foundation for Young Australians is hosting a week long gathering of indigenous young people seeking a better understanding of leadership. The Forum provides a space to be informed by significant Australian leaders (indigenous & non indigenous) and a time for peer and personal planning.

Any indigenous young person aged 20 – 30 years, who has already demonstrated leadership capability and who wants to develop their leadership skills should attend.

The Forum will be held at The Women's College, University of Sydney and commences **Saturday 28 September 2002**. The Foundation will cover the cost of getting to and attending the Forum. **Applications to attend close Friday 12 July 2002.**

Web: <http://www.youngaustralians.org>

Push Summits

The Push Summits are designed specifically for FReeZA committees and youth workers. There are 3 summits co-ordinated annually by the Push throughout Victoria. Each summit incorporates the following components: information sharing; workshops and presentations; training and advice;

sponsor and funding advice; special guest appearances by successful Australian band members etc.

Registrations close 21 June 2002.

Tuesday 2nd July 2002: Grainery Lane, 34 Doveton Street North Ballarat.

Friday 5 July: Brunswick Town Hall, Cnr Sydney Road and Dawson St, Brunswick.

Tuesday 9 July: Lions Club, Bukley Street, Morwell.

For more info call 9380 1277

Email: push@thepush.asn.au

Web: <http://www.thepush.asn.au>

National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention: Update

Over the coming weeks the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission will be making key submissions to the inquiry available on the HREOC website. The first submissions to be released focus on education in immigration detention centres. Public hearings for the Inquiry began this month in Melbourne.

Web: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au>

New report on children's health

Australia's Children: their health and wellbeing 2002 is the second national report on the health of children in Australia. It provides comprehensive information on the current and long-term status of children's health, and on the risk and protective factors influencing their health and wellbeing. The 2002 report builds on the previous report by examining in more detail the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children living in metropolitan, rural and remote areas. It is an important reference for anyone interested in child health. More info is available from the website:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/media/2002/mr020517.html>

VCOSS Social Policy Congress: Developing Visions for New Ways Forward

31 July - 2 August, 2002

Stamford Plaza

Little Collins Street, Melbourne

The VCOSS Social Policy Congress provides a forum for those in the social and community sector to engage in dialogue around innovative strategies across policy, program and legislative areas that address key needs and issues in our community. The focus of the Congress is on options and solutions for ways forward.

Broad themes will include community wellbeing, human rights, citizenship, partnerships, rural and regional areas, community building, poverty; specific policy areas such as health, education, housing, disability; issues relating to groups experiencing particular disadvantage, including Indigenous Australians, women, refugees, young people.

VCOSS invites individuals and organisations involved in social policy and program delivery to participate in Congress 2002.

For more info: Carolyn Atkins

Ph: 03 9654 5050

Email: carolyn.atkins@vcoss.org.au

Web: <http://www.vcoss.org.au>

Impressions

By Lise Dalla Torre

Lise Dalla Torre is the YACVic Young Media Spokesperson. She is also a member of YACVic's Youth Reference Group and was involved in developing and running a workshop at Reversing the Drift.



A report about the *Reversing the Drift* summit will be available on the YACVic website in the coming months. Stay tuned!

<http://www.yacvic.org.au>

Reversing the Drift was a great success by all accounts. The response to the solutions summit was overwhelming and drew youth workers, teachers, young people, youth organisations etc from all over the state. The media also expressed a keen interest in the conference and the issues arising from it. The conference was "Reversing the Drift" not "Closing the Gate," it was about providing greater choice for young people in rural and regional areas, not holding them back.

Michelle Blanchard, Paul Van Holsteyn and myself, Lise Dalla Torre, represented the Youth Reference Group at the summit. We ran an hour and a half workshop, which attracted approximately 60 people, which was well over the maximum 50 participants. The workshop was an interactive, discussion based session titled *Enhancing Youth Participation in Rural and Regional Victoria*. The session involved the audience discussing and identifying the barriers faced when involving young people in their organisations, and discussing the solutions that their respective organisations had used in an attempt to overcome such hindrances.

The session was a success and generally flowed as follows, "well, in my organisation we are faced with such and such problem, because la di da."

To which another participant would add "but in my school or organisation we have overcome that problem by blah blah" and occasionally someone else would volunteer "my organisation has a similar policy and we have found that it is best to implement it THIS way".

For our workshop we acknowledged that no one has all the answers, but there are solutions and suggestions and recommendations out there that often travel from one individual to another, and often by word of mouth. We wanted to use the most of our knowledge, and the knowledge of all our participants, and make our workshop a two-way experience. We have taken some great ideas from the workshop, and the participants noted that they had too. An electronic copy of the suggestions, solutions and barriers identified will soon be available on the YACVic website.

In order to make our presentation possible, I'd like to thank the Youth Reference Group, for the suggestions and comments forwarded to Michelle, Paul and myself, when we were empowered as the RTD working group. I'd also like to thank the YACVic Secretariat, for their support and resources, and also for their tireless work in organising and running *Reversing the Drift*.

This is just one of the many amazing projects showcased at Reversing the Drift...

Mum and Dad got the Bank Back: The Community Bank story

The Concept

The Bendigo Bank's Community Bank program has allowed many small rural and suburban communities to get back on their feet after desertion by the 'big four' banking giants.

Mum and Dad Got the Bank Back is a book 37 young rural and suburban Australians are collating at the moment under the management of Lead On Australia. A partnership has been formed by Lead On and VicHealth to see it through to completion.

24 towns across rural and suburban Australia including 13 in Victoria, three in N.S.W, two in S.A and 11 in W.A, have selected young people to write a section of the book. Each section will tell the story of how the affected towns who had lost (or were losing) their banking facilities pulled together and made the brave choice to form a Community Bank of their own.

The book's focus will be on the social change, human growth and community building outcomes of the Community Bank process. Each of the towns' stories will be unique and full of personality. Many of the communities featured are small and barely heard of. This book will put their achievements into the spotlight.

Though each of the 24 stories will have unique character, there will still be a binding element. Each of the towns has taken a hold of its destiny and has refused to disappear into oblivion. The banking component will remain a secondary focus throughout. The real story will be about the people involved in the concept of community banking.

Mum and Dad Got the Bank Back aims to demonstrate that small communities do have a voice and that there is hope for their survival.

Reason for the Book

Mum and Dad Got the Bank Back will be unique, being entirely written and edited by young people. Such opportunities are rarely given to young people anywhere – let alone in regional areas.

Lead On, a Youth and Community Development organisation, the facilitator of this project, takes the view that young people are an untapped resource of fresh ideas and ability. They aim to educate the community about how valuable young people are.

Through this project the writers will gain valuable research, interviewing and writing skills and will be actively interacting with senior members of the community while at the same time learning about their community.

Creating a bank is not something a town does everyday and this book is to celebrate the achievement. This book aims to tell the rest of Australia of the determination to survive, which so many rural towns have mustered up when faced with ruin due to dwindling or no banking facilities.

It will also be a message of hope to all those communities who in the next few months will find themselves in similar situations due to the recent announcement of branch closures.

For further information please contact Lucy Tucker, Project Manager at book@leadon.com.au or phone on (03) 5442 3177 mobile 0402 13 72 46

Reversing the Drift: Themes of the summit

Theme 1: Claiming a place for young people in rural & regional Victoria

We all know what it's like to stand outside that exclusive shop window, wishing we could go inside and try that special item on, but at the same time knowing that if we did the assistant might not take us seriously affirming our fears that we don't 'belong'.

Unfortunately this is the way that many young people in rural and regional Victoria feel every day of their lives. They don't feel they belong in the areas where they've grown up, not because they don't like it there, but simply because there doesn't seem to be a space for them – somewhere where they are valued, where their voices are listened to and where they are given choices and opportunities.

Too often, we see representations of young people as problems not as positive contributors or we only value their contribution in a token way. We must challenge the policies, structures and procedures that reinforce these stereotypes and work towards the active and meaningful participation of young people.

Too often we do not provide young people with appropriate spaces where they can develop their

own identity and ideas and where they are given opportunities to be leaders and change-makers within their own communities. Spaces where they feel safe and supported, free from discrimination and violence and where their diversity is celebrated. We need to think about how we can better support young people so that they do feel valued and so that they are given an opportunity to claim their unique place in our communities.

Theme 2: Social connection - strategies to combat isolation

We hear a lot about the value of community building, capacity building and community connection but what do those words mean and how does it happen?

At a basic level, we all need someone to talk to, someone we can depend on and someone who understands us. This is particularly important for young people. The transitions from childhood to adolescence and adulthood can be difficult as young people look to increase their independence and find their place in society. It's a time when we need to reassure them that they have a full and useful role to play in our communities.

But too often we hear of young people who feel they are not connected to the community. They

often say that there are too few opportunities available to them to get involved and too few people to turn to if they need support and assistance. These issues are further compounded for young people in rural areas, where resources, technologies, and people are not so easily accessible and where the tyranny of distance just adds to feelings of isolation.

If we expect young people to make a successful transition to independence, we need to assist them to access networks and resources that provide them with opportunities to develop connections to both their local community and to their communities of interest – that is networks of people who share similar cultural, artistic, sporting, social and recreational interests.

We also need to provide stable and supportive environments and relationships – be it on the sports field, in the classroom, the workplace or in the home.

Most importantly, to overcome feelings of isolation, young people must be given an opportunity to help shape the community they're a part of. When we seek to assist young people, we often lock them out of this process. Yet they may

Continued page 7...

Rural life of us

a new report on young people and workers with young people in country Victoria

by Liz Davies

The health and welfare of young people in rural areas of Australia is, according to a range of morbidity and mortality indicators, worse than their urban counterparts. In addition, workers who seek to address the needs of young people, face a range of barriers specific to rural areas. However, there are many examples of initiatives developed locally in rural areas by workers with young people to address their unique needs.

YACVic and the Centre for Adolescent Health have released a report called *The Rural Life of Us: Young People and Workers with Young People in Country Victoria*. This report provides an overview of the health and welfare issues facing young people in rural Victoria, the issues facing workers in delivering services to young people and documents examples of programs developed to address these issues.

The Centre for Adolescent Health and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria jointly conducted the consultation to draw together existing knowledge and research to provide a snapshot of the issues facing young people and workers with young people in rural Victoria. The consultation provides a focus for further discussion about the special issues faced in rural, regional and remote Victoria, in particular the 'Reversing the Drift' rural youth solutions summit, and informed the development of rural specific youth health and welfare training.

The first section of the report outlines the consultation process and identifies limitations with this approach. The consultation involved meetings with the Office for Youth, rural Regional

Youth Committees throughout Victoria, visits to organisations who provide services to rural young people and the collection of relevant research and reports.

The second section of the report provides essential background information about rural Australia. It recognises the impact geographical location has on the nature, prevalence and impact of issues facing young people such as access to services, drug and alcohol use, transport etc. Similarly it is necessary to recognise the diversity between and within regional, rural and remote communities and the consequent difficulty in generalising about the impact of geographic location on youth health and welfare. In general, however, it is essential that 'rurality' in the development of policy and programs is taken into account, for example, the need for vehicles, mobile phones, travel time etc.

Perhaps part of the reason it is difficult to understand the impact geographic location has on young people and service delivery is the lack of an adequate, all encompassing definition of 'regional', 'rural' and 'remote'. For example, rural can be defined as all areas outside capital cities, or it can be those areas and towns with less than 1,000 residents. Myths that surround rural Australia also contribute to significant misunderstanding about the nature of rural Australia. Some myths include: rural virtue vs urban vice, rural Australians are backward, simple, conservative, 'red necked', homogenous and harmonious, rural Australia is peripheral to Australian affairs, and farmers and farming are synonymous with rural Australia.

These myths need to be challenged. For example, less than a third of rural Australians work in agricultural industries, thus rural Australia is about far more than farming. Rural Australia is hardly peripheral to the rest of the Australian population when one considers that rural

Australia provides two-thirds of all export income, ensures Australia has a self sufficient food supply and provides a major holiday destination for Australians and overseas tourists.

Over the past 20 years there has been a rural down-turn due to globalisation, deregulation and regionalisation, resulting in population loss in rural areas and a reduction of services. How rural Australia is tackling these major changes also debunks some of the myths with demonstrations of great innovation such as diversification of produce e.g. Alpacas, olives, emus etc.

The settlement of the Australian population gives some clues as to the heterogeneity of Australia and to the issues young people and workers face. Australia is one of the most urbanised yet also least densely populated nations in the world. More specifically, 84% of Australians live within 50 kms of the coast and 0.5% of the population live on 50% of Australia's landmass.

In terms of health and welfare, rural Australians face lower social, economic and health status compared with their urban counterparts. This reflects the rural downturn over the last two decades and the difficulties unique to living in rural Australia such as isolation, and the difficulty of accessing basic health care, education, employment etc.

The final section of the report documents the outcome of the consultation. The following issues were identified by one or more of the regions.

Victorian Regional, Rural and Remote Youth Issues

- All regions identified lack of transport as a major issue for young people in accessing health and welfare services, education, training, employment, recreation etc.
- Increasing rural to urban migration, due to education and employment opportunities and

be best placed to identify the issues and determine the solutions. We must recognise that young people can often show us the way when we're making decisions about issues which affect them.

It is through creating opportunities and involving young people that we help to develop individual capacities and in turn strengthen a sense of community.

Theme 3: Sustainability, creating long-term opportunities, long term solutions

How are we - young people, workers, parents and bureaucrats - going to sustain the energy and enthusiasm we have experienced over the last two days? Will we go back to our communities and review our policies, practices and structures to ensure positive and sustainable changes for young people?

So how do we achieve sustainability?

We must think beyond strict economic terms because sustainability is not just about securing adequate and ongoing funding. We need to consider social and environmental sustainability as well as the financial.

Firstly, we need to think about how we sustain our social capital - our people and our communities. This involves providing caring and safe communities where young people are free from discrimination and violence and where diversity is celebrated. Communities that provide greater opportunities and choices for young people to give them a sense of optimism about their future.

Second, we need to recognise the importance of the environment. Environmental sustainability is vital to achieve economic and social growth. To ensure healthy and diverse environments we need to re-think our planning and conservation processes. This is particularly true in rural and regional Victoria where the natural environment typically provides the backbone of the community.

Finally, we need to work towards economic sustainability. This involves linking communities, reducing inequalities and providing equitable access to resources. At an individual level, we must ensure young people can access education, employment, income and housing to sustain a reasonable standard of health and well-being and to allow them to actively participate in their communities.

Sustainability can be achieved if we develop collaborative partnerships that are built on trust and common purpose. Ultimately, if we continue to work together to achieve our vision, we will build a better future for young Victorians.

negative perceptions of the rural community, and young people in the community.

- Health and welfare status of young people in rural areas lower than their urban counterparts, although mortality rates have decreased.
- Perceived increase in alcohol and drug use and teenage pregnancy.
- Same sex attracted young people at risk of health compromising behaviour and often face stigma from the community.
- Lack of access to health services due to lack of awareness of service, lack of transport and perceived lack of anonymity.
- Depression and anxiety the most common issues faced by young people
- High rural male youth suicide rate.
- High unemployment, lack of alternatives to secondary schools and low retention rates.
- Negative community perception of young people and lack of opportunities for young people to participate in community life.
- Lack of recreational opportunities, e.g. skate parks, drop in centres, BMX track etc.
- Lack of appropriate housing.
- Difficulty meeting mutual obligation requirements for income support.

Regional, Rural and Remote Youth Service Delivery/Organisational and Worker Issues

- Difficulty recruiting and retaining trained workers with young people, due to factors such as lack of long term funding and local youth work training.
- Urbocentricism in the funding of services which fail to account for delivery of services to sparsely populated areas over 100s or 1000s of miles.

- Fragmentation of funding between government departments and between State and Commonwealth governments.
- Short term funding of projects.
- Lack of accessible youth-specific drug and alcohol and mental health services.
- Difficulty in providing services to young people in outlying areas.
- Lack of coordinated service delivery at the local and regional level.

Regional, Rural and Remote Youth Service Models

- No 'one-size-fits-all' model of youth service delivery.
- Generalist youth workers considered most appropriate for rural areas.
- Outreach a good model for service provision.
- Role of local government in the coordination and provision of youth services.
- The need to build links with the local media to improve image of young people.
- Increased local control of funding for local youth service delivery.
- Examples of rural youth interventions, models and programs are highlighted.

The full report is available on the YACVic website <http://www.yacvic.org.au>

Federal Government to tackle Age Discrimination

The Howard Government was re-elected last year on a platform that included significant initiatives to assist older and younger Australians in a number of important areas. Among these, a major priority is the development of legislation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of age.

The Howard Government recognises the need for Australians of all ages to be able to participate fully in our society. Great importance is placed on the economic and social contribution that all Australians can make to our community in a wide range of activities. Furthermore, the Government takes very seriously allegations of discrimination and condemns discrimination in all its forms. In light of these important concerns, the process of developing age discrimination legislation has begun.

Age discrimination has increasingly become a significant problem for older Australians, as well as for children and young people. However, age discrimination is not currently prohibited by federal legislation. Other kinds of discrimination are already made unlawful by the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

The Government recognises that age discrimination legislation must be balanced and fair, taking into account the needs of both business and the community. The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department has begun consultation with business, employer and employee groups, and community organisations to assist in developing the new legislation. Consultations such as these will help to ensure that the legislation strikes the right balance between the need to eliminate unfair discrimination on the basis of age and the need to ensure sufficient flexibility to allow for situations where age requirements may be necessary — for example in relation to social security, youth wages and job training. Once all relevant interests and concerns have been discussed and properly considered, an Age Discrimination Bill will be drafted for consideration by the Federal Parliament. Subject to the extent of the consultation process that is required, it is hoped that a Bill will be ready for introduction into Parliament by late 2002.

The Attorney-General's Department will also work with other Government Departments responsible for health, employment, welfare and other matters concerning older Australians, children and young people. While the new legislation will protect Australians of all ages, it will also be an integral part of a wide range of other Government initiatives that will benefit both older and younger Australians in many important areas of public life. In relation to older persons, there are a range of Government initiatives focussing on employment, training and other retirement income issues; infrastructure and community support; and health and aged care. In relation to young people, the Government has recently created the new position of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, held by the Hon Larry Anthony MP. In addition, a number of Government initiatives are aimed at improving the employability of young people, both while at school and after joining the labour market.

Consultation will continue with community and business organisations, including the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, throughout the process of developing new age discrimination legislation. YACVIC has generously offered to receive any questions or comments that its members might wish to raise about age discrimination or the proposed legislation and to pass these on to us. This kind of assistance from such an important sector of the community will help to ensure that age discrimination legislation will benefit and protect all Australians throughout their lives.

The Hon Daryl Williams AM QC MP
Commonwealth Attorney-General

Editors note: YACVIC met with the Federal Attorney-General's department earlier this year. We're excited about the prospect of federal Anti-Discrimination legislation and with your help we'll work to make sure that lessons from the Victorian Equal Opportunity legislation get translated into better federal law.

Some good news for young Victorians

State Budget 2002/2003

The following list is a summary of some of the key elements of the 2002-2003 Victorian State Budget which affect young people.

Public transport

The boost to public transport is particularly welcome given that a lack of transport is a key barrier to young people's participation in the community. The initiatives include:

- \$36 million to provide 25 new or upgraded bus routes around Melbourne.
- An increase of \$8 million to bus services in regional and rural Victoria with 27 new or improved services across the state.
- \$31 million to improve Victoria's free school bus service including:
 - A conveyance allowance of up to \$700 to assist parents with travel costs where the free school bus is not available.
 - Access to spare seats for VCE students to allow them to undertake a course not available at their closest school.
 - The number of non-government students in an area will be considered when starting a new school bus services.
 - To start at the beginning of the 2003 school year.
- \$30.5 million to extend Tram Route 75 to Vermont South.
- \$90 million to upgrade the Warrnambool-Melbourne rail line.
- \$98 million for the electrification of the railway line from Broadmeadows to Craigieburn.
- \$55 million to boost the public transport system in the Scoresby Corridor.

FReeZA

A very welcome announcement that FReeZA's funding is secure for the next 4 years (which is about as on-going as it gets!).

- \$8 million (\$2 million a year) over 4 years.

Education

Education is a welcomed winner in this year's budget. Initiatives include:

- \$81.6 million to hire 300 additional secondary teachers.
- \$216.4 million for 100 schools and TAFE institutes across the state to be rebuilt or refurbished.
- \$47.7 million for the implementation of the new Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). By 2004 VCAL will be available in all schools.
- \$3.6 million over 4 years to fund the appointment of 15 Koori educators and 5 Home school Liaison Officers to strengthen relationships between the Koori community and the school.

Community Services

A range of community services have received a boost which will particularly assist disadvantaged young people.

Juvenile Justice

- \$14.8 million to redevelopment Turana.
- Plan to close Turana June 2004 and build a 26 bed facility on the old site and a 16 bed demountable unit at Malmsbury for young male offenders aged between 17- 21.

Housing

- \$380 million to expand the supply of public and community housing units.
- An extra 8.8 million over 4 years to further the implementation of the VHS.

Mental health

- \$360,000 to expand services for young people whose mental health problems are complicated by drug use.

Child protection

- \$65 million over 4 years including:
 - 60 extra child protection workers – an increase of 10%.
 - \$20 million over 4 years for an Intensive Therapeutic Service to assist children and young people to recover from the impact of physical and sexual abuse.
 - \$5 million investment in infrastructure.

What's missing?

- No increase in the age jurisdiction of the Children's court.
- No reduction in the cost of the tertiary student concession card to bring it in line with the secondary student concession card – a pre-election commitment.
- No change to the value of the Education Maintenance Allowance (a payment to assist low income families with the costs of providing primary and secondary school students with the basics e.g. shoes, books and excursions).

Prepared by Jenny Lawton and Anna Mandoki, Financial Counsellors

Shared household rent payments...

How *not* to get kicked out for unpaid rent

Best of Enemies

Suraya was stoked when she and her best friend, Tiziana, found a great flat to share. It was the first time either of them had lived away from home, so it was just parties every weekend. But Tiziana's fashion addiction meant she kept blowing all her pay on clothes and never had enough left over for her share of the rent each month. Suraya tried to cover Tiziana for a while, but just didn't have the bucks. When the landlord got fed up waiting for the rent, she got a Possession Order from the Tribunal allowing the police to evict them. They lost the bond, which went towards the unpaid rent. Suraya was dark about the money but what really pissed her off was moving back home. She hasn't spoken to Tiziana since.

The lowdown on shared bank accounts:

Suss out fee-free accounts – some banks offer special deals for students & many credit unions don't charge members.

- Check out CHOICE magazine at your library for the latest survey comparing deposit accounts.
- Open the account in the names of everyone in the house.
- Set it up so that at least two people have to sign to take money out – not just one person.
- An automatic transfer of the rent money to the landlord can save hassles. But if there's not enough money - hefty fees will apply.
- REMEMBER to change the account names and signatories when anyone moves in or out.

Getting help:

Free telephone advice for renters:

Tenants Union of Victoria – 9416 2577
Consumer Affairs Tenants Helpline 1300 55 8181

For referral to a free community financial counsellor:

Financial & Consumer Rights Council – 9614 5433
Credit Helpline – 9602 3800/1800 803 800

For help to resolve a dispute in your shared household:

Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria – 1800 658 528

For a hearing of a dispute between a landlord and residential tenant:

Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal
(Residential Tenancies List) – 9628 9700

It can be loads of fun sharing a house with a bunch of other people – plus a great, fairly low-cost way of getting your independence. But there is a serious side to it as well (there's always a catch isn't there?) – like making sure **everyone** in the house keeps up to date with their rent. If you get behind with the rent you risk being out on the street. Even if just ONE person gets behind, you can ALL end up suffering for it.

Tips for getting the rent together

Make sure **everyone's on board** with the idea that paying the rent comes first – no matter what! That cool new pair of boots (yeah you REALLY need them) or the excellent coat that you've been dying for will just have to wait until AFTER the rent's been paid.

It helps if everyone knows **when the rent's due**. Some people can be very forgetful about this stuff. Stick a BIG note where no-one's gonna miss it – like on the fridge, the TV, or the cat.

Try to **put aside your share** of the rent as soon as you get paid instead of waiting until it's actually due 'cos you might not have enough \$\$\$ left by then (sound familiar?).

Look at setting up a **household account** for rent payments with a bank or credit union. The idea is that on pay day everyone deposits their bit into the household account so the rent gets paid IN FULL & ON TIME.

A household account gets even easier if everyone sets up **an automatic transfer** each pay day from their own account into the household account. That way no-one has to hassle over the rent money each payday!

Anyone whose name is on the lease can be evicted and forced to pay the unpaid rent – it doesn't matter who didn't pay their share. This is because everyone who signs the lease is "**jointly and severally liable**" meaning everyone is responsible.

What to do if you get into strife

Late or missed rent payments can piss the landlord off and lead to legal action to evict you. When stuff-ups happen – DON'T PANIC !!! There might still be time to fix things up before you get thrown out. Here's some tips if you have late or missed rent payments.

If the money is coming in, **let your landlord or agent know** when you'll be able to pay them. Give them a firm date and chances are they'll agree to wait.

If you only have some of the money now, then work out how much you can afford to pay to catch up the extra every payday. Then write to your landlord or agent explaining your **offer to pay**. Your letter should say how much money you will pay now and say firm dates for the amounts you will pay until you are up to date. Ask them to hold off action. Keep a

copy of the letter – it's proof that you tried to do something about the problem.

Try not to make any promises unless you KNOW you can deliver! The landlord or agent may not stick to their side of the agreement if you break yours.

If the landlord has heard it all before, they might **take legal steps to evict you**. Now, listen up, 'cos this bit's important. Landlords cannot evict you unless they first go to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Tribunal) to get a Possession Order. Even if the landlord gets the Possession Order only the POLICE can turf you out.

The Tribunal will let you know when the hearing is on so you can go along and argue your case. The Tribunal has the power to decide if you should be **given a chance** to catch up the rent. It's REALLY important to **go to the Tribunal hearing**. If you're not there - the Tribunal will go ahead and make the order - so it's best to go along and let them hear your side of the story.

Make a list of things you want to tell the Tribunal that **supports your case**. For example, how you got behind with the rent, what you have done to sort it out so far and how you're going to get back up to date.

Useful stuff to take to the hearing might be: a statement of your income and expenditure showing how much you can afford to pay towards the rent (a financial counsellor can help you with this if you get stuck); medical certificates if you've been ill; copies of any unexpected bills that you've had to pay. If someone else has information that supports what you say, ask them to come along to give evidence at the Tribunal hearing.

If the Tribunal makes an order allowing you to **pay off the rent you owe** - you HAVE to stick to the order. If you don't, you probably won't get a second chance and the landlord can re-apply to the Tribunal to have you evicted.

If the Tribunal makes a **Possession Order**, this means you are out on your ear BUT you can ask the Tribunal for a "stay of the order", meaning an extension of time before the Possession Order can be acted on by the Police. This will buy you a bit of time to organise to move out.

If you miss the Tribunal hearing & have a really good reason (like you were seriously sick), you might be able to **get the case reheard** – but you'll have to move FAST! It's best to contact the Tribunal in person to apply for a rehearing.

YACVic welcomes your submissions to the YIKES! calendar. Email contributions to info@yacvic.org.au or phone us on (03) 9612 8999. YACVic does not take any responsibility for incorrect information listed on this page so please check details of any events before attending.

events and resources

Deadline for contributions to the next edition of yikes is 19:07:02

■ Building Better Boards

Date: 13 June 2002 - 14 June 2002

This conference is designed to provide a forum for nonprofit boards and management committee members to explore their governing responsibilities together with their executive staff. The dialog will move from: Focusing on big picture and local realities; Thinking to doing; Concepts to Implementation

Where: Novatel Hotel, Brighton Beach, Sydney

Web: www.governance.com.au

■ Mediation skills workshop: Shared housing

Date: 19 June 2002

Time: 9:15 AM

Presented by Anglicare Youth Services, Glenroy this one day workshop is designed to equip you with skills around providing appropriate mediation for people who are within a shared household. Cost: \$132.00. The workshop will be repeated on Wednesday 14 August.

Where: Wiseman House, 32 Widford St Glenroy

For more info: To register contact Fred Stern ph: 9306 0000

■ Practical Playwriting Workshop Series

Date: 22 June 2002 - 27 July 2002

Time: 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Express media are once again running their annual workshop program, and are inviting you to participate. These workshops are presented by young people with a wealth of practical experience in the arts and media. Join award-winning young playwright Lally Katz in this six week course which will teach you about all aspects of play-writing. Each week will feature one 2-hour session, with different writing exercises and discussions each week. Cost: Full \$88, Students \$77, Express Media members \$66, GST inclusive.

Where: Express Media, 1st Floor, 156 George Street Fitzroy

For more info: (03) 9416 3305

Email: info@expressmedia.org.au

Web: <http://expressmedia.org.au>

■ CWAV Practice/Policy Forum

Date: 26 June 2002

Time: 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Refugee and asylum seeker focused forum

Where: Shell Theatre, Shell House, 1 Spring St (cnr Flinders St), Melbourne.

For more info: Ph: 9614 1577

Email: admin@cwav.asn.au

Web: <http://www.cwav.asn.au>

■ National Youth Media Awards Closing date

Date: 28 June 2002

The National Youth Media Awards 2002 are a Commonwealth Government initiative that is open to all journalists, producers and presenters in the Australian media. The Awards recognise the important role the media play in forming public opinion about young people and aim to encourage the media to take the lead by looking for positive story angles when reporting on young people and youth issues.

Web: <http://www.thesource.gov.au/nyma/>

■ Creating a sustainable future: A national conference for secondary students

Date: 2 July 2002 - 6 July 2002

Earth Sustainability Conference Inc. is an inclusive, non-profit, non-affiliated network of educators, students, community leaders and members of the wider community. They are organising a national residential conference at the University of Melbourne which will bring students together to examine the issue of sustainability. In an intellectual and artistic environment, students will develop critical, constructive and creative reflections and actions to these complex and crucial issues. Their work will be enriched and extended by exposure to the diversity, beliefs, dreams, gifts and experiences of the presenters and the other participants.

The conference atmosphere will be one of inclusion, acceptance, encouragement, support and co-operation. Students will be able to build leadership skills, their sense of worth and the belief in themselves as shapers of the future. They will be able to return to their schools and communities empowered to contribute in informed and effective ways.

This event is supported by the Australian Catholic University, the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Schools for a Sustainable Future, Mater Christi College, Xavier College and the Catholic Education Office. A group of students from all school sectors in Victoria are playing a key role in every stage of the planning and management of the conference.

Where: Newman College, University of Melbourne

For more info: Caroline Smith, Australian Catholic University Ph 9953 3281

Email: C.Smith@patrick.acu.edu.au

■ Electronic Networking 2002: Building Community

Date: 3 July 2002 - 5 July 2002

This conference, the 5th in Australia, is a must for anyone who is interested in enriching communities through accessible electronic networking. Previous conferences have been a feature of the electronic community networking landscape in Australia since 1996.

Presentations at the conference will address many themes include advocacy and political action; ageing; community building, education, learning, and community networking; disability; digital divide; government networks for the community; indigenous and minority networking; library networking; public policy; theory and small business; and technical issues.

Where: Monash University Caulfield Campus, Melbourne

Web: <http://ccnr.net/2002/>

■ Current Trends and Issues in Adolescent Health Symposium

Date: 18 July 2002

Time: 9:30 AM - 12:20 PM

What's the latest in Adolescent Health trends and issues? Find out on July 18th

The Centre for Adolescent Health & Welfare presents Current Trends and Issues in Adolescent Health, a symposium for all those interested in youth issues, effective prevention, early intervention and health promotion. Speakers include Professor Linda Richter,

Executive Director, Child Youth and Family Development, South Africa 'The people at the heart of social and economic development', and Professor Fiona Stanley Director Telethon Inst for Child Health Research, Perth WA. Cost: \$55 inc GST

Where: Ella Latham Theatre, Royal Children's Hospital, Flemington Rd Parkville Vic 3052

For more info: Leonie Pike Phone 9345 7912

Email: pikel@cryptic.rch.unimelb.edu.au

Web: <http://www.copas.net.au/>

■ VCOSS Social Policy Congress: Developing Visions for New Ways Forward

Date: 31 July - 2 August

See page 3 for more info

Where: Stamford Plaza, Little Collins Street, Melbourne

For more info: Carolyn Atkins ph 03 9654 5050

Email: carolyn.atkins@vcoss.org.au

Web: <http://www.vcoss.org.au>

■ Life Youth Concert

Date: 3 August 2002

A battle of the bands event, co-presented with Chapel off Chapel gallery and theatre.

Where: Prahran Town Hall

For more info: City of Stonnington 9823 1333

Email: council@stonnington.vic.gov.au

Web: www.stonnington.vic.gov.au

■ ACWA 2002 Conference: What Works?

Date: 2 September 2002 - 4 September 2002

Hosted by the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies this conference is for practitioners, managers, young people, academics and policy makers in the government and non-government child youth and family service sector.

Where: Swiss Grand Hotel, Bondi Beach, Sydney

For more info: <http://www.acwa.asn.au>

■ Putting it all Together

Date: 15 September 2002 - 17 September 2002

A National Forum on Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention hosted by AUSEINET in Adelaide. The forum's intent is to go beyond the rhetoric and unpack the 'real' issues and challenges facing individuals, groups, organisations and governments in moving forward in achieving a mentally healthy society.

Where: To be confirmed

Email: To be on mailing list auseinet.flinders.edu.au

Web: <http://auseinet.flinders.edu.au>