

YOUNG VOICES!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA INC.

In the spotlight

It's not often that you get the Herald Sun, The Age, the ABC, MX, and a range of other media people in the same room as a bunch of young people and youth workers. But *In the Spotlight*, a forum on young people and the media made it happen at the St Kilda Town Hall in February.



The forum explored the issues facing journalists, editors, young people and community workers in the development of a news story. How does a news story gain momentum and how can it ultimately impact on the development of public policy? How can young people and workers with young people constructively contribute to media reports?

With presentations and displays from SYN FM, Express Media, the Next Wave Festival, Streetwise and many others this forum also showcased the wealth of independent media produced by young people.

The day kicked off with a lively panel discussion facilitated by Chris Keogh about the issues concerning media and young people. The panel discussion was focused around a hypothetical situation: the daughter of a fantasy Premier had been involved in a car crash and the driver was over the legal blood alcohol limit. How would members of the media report this?

On the panel was SYN FM Station Manager Jo Curtin who felt "a bit strange sitting up on the stage surrounded by people who have 'made it' in the media industry".

"I was perched right down the end of this mixed bag of media-types, right next to editor of The Age, Michael Gawenda."

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Platform Youth Theatre

During 1998 the City of Darebin staged its first youth theatre production. The show was called *Platform* and it involved over 20 young people from the local area. Named by arts critic Geoffrey Milne from 3LO as one of the best shows for the year, Platform was written by local playwright, Patricia Cornelius. It was researched amongst young people and dealt honestly with the many issues facing them in today's society. It looked at the lives of eight young people as they struggled in an economic and political climate that offered them little future.

The success of this production inspired the young people involved to, in the words of the Company's chairperson, "keep the vibe alive" and so Platform Youth Theatre was born.

Platform Youth Theatre is now established as a permanent contemporary theatre company for young people in the northern suburbs of Melbourne and holds regular performance and workshop projects for people between the ages of 16 and 26 years of age.

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

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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news in brief

Centenary Medals

YACVic celebrates the announcement that Centenary Medals have been awarded to Rowena Allen, YACVic Chairperson and Janet Jukes, YACVic Executive Officer.

Centenary Medals announced yesterday honour people prominent in the community, popular culture, science, fashion, sport, the arts, media, politics and business.

Both Janet and Rowena were honoured for their services to young people. Rowena and Janet join several other committed and inspirational members of the youth sector who were also recognised for their contributions in this field.

Partnership project

Negotiation of a NGO Price Index for Disability, Community Care and Housing Assistance services funded by the Department of Human Services.

A price index joint working party (of which YACVic is a member) between the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the community, health and housing sectors has been established and met for the first time on 13 February 2003. DHS is looking to reach agreement with the sector prior to June 2002 so that the index can form part of the 3 Year Funding and Service Agreements to be implemented from July 2003. However, DHS is prepared to consider a longer time frame to ensure that there has been an opportunity for sector input and negotiation around the scope, operation and amount of the index.

What is a price index? It is an annual percentage amount to cover all estimated price movements bringing together estimated wage movement, CPI for non-wage costs and a nominal productivity factor. The NGO index will be applied only to base funding with the annual base budget in Year 1 of the Agreement being increased by the index % amount in years 2 and 3. It is intended that it will be applied at the start of each year to prospectively

increase funding in lieu of wage or CPI increases during the year. For many organisations this will give greater funding certainty much earlier in the financial year.

DHS has indicated that the indexation process will allow for the price index amount to be increased in exceptional circumstances such as state/sector-wide wage decisions approved by Government's Economic Review Committee and changes to wage related cost factors such as Workcover and the superannuation guarantee levy. The sector will be provided an opportunity to identify other possible exceptional circumstances so that these are incorporated by DHS into the operation of the index.

Organisations are encouraged to provide any historical price movements in their service to guide a decision about what should determine the appropriate index level and to identify any exceptional circumstances from their own experience that need to be incorporated in the index guidelines

For more information contact VCOSS on (03) 9654 5050

From rhetoric to reality:

VCOSS congress 14 & 15 August 2003.

The Victorian Council of Social Services Congress is held annually. The agenda for the Congress is set by the community sector. To register interest or for more information contact Carolyn Atkins ph: (03) 9654 5050, email: carolyn.atkins@vcoss.org.au or see the VCOSS website <http://www.vcoss.org.au>.

Welfare reform

The Commonwealth Government has recently released a consultation paper called *Building a Simpler System to Help Jobless Families and Individuals*. This document outlines a number of complex issues such as eligibility for income assistance, incentives for paid work and participation requirements.

The discussion paper has implications for young people so it's important that young people and workers with young people contribute. For more information see http://www.facs.gov.au/welfare_reform.

Drugs and sentencing

The Fitzroy legal service recently launched a report *Drugs, the Law and the Sentencing of Offenders: A Community Discussion of Future Directions*. The research looks at two specific issues: the effectiveness of the laws and their policing, and the treatment of offenders by the courts and sentencing.

It contains a number of recommendations which revolve around the failure of the prohibition approach, the need to improve police and court sentencing practices, and support of community initiatives.

For inquiries contact Fitzroy Legal Service (03) 9416 3744.

Gippsland futures

Small communities often suffer from a lack of large employers who can provide the necessary work experience placement for young people, and who have the capacity to provide trainee and apprentice opportunities. In many of these communities, the biggest employers are government departments (federal, state and local) and not-for-profit bodies that are government funded.

In light of this the Department of Sustainability and Environment, together with local educators and youth workers have come up with the idea of running a summit on the future of young people in Gippsland.

This summit aims to explore the role government, government funded agencies and the business sector can play in assisting the training and skill development of rural young people. It also aims to: encourage employers to make a commitment to the development of futures for young rural people; to express this by establishing policies and targets and; by public affirmation, encourage others to do so.

The summit hopes to provide motivation and initiate opportunities for communities, employers and young people to realise creative opportunities for their futures and their contribution to the broader social, environmental and economic development of their community. It also hopes to establish networks and contacts for young people seeking mentors, training and guidance.

Where and When? 13 May, 2003 at Bairnsdale, Nagle College.

For more info contact Eva Grunden on (03) 5153 0588 or visit

<http://www.futures.goanna.com>

Talkback Classroom

Talkback Classroom gives senior secondary students the opportunity to interview members of Parliament and community leaders on issues of importance to young people. Each Talkback Classroom forum features a panel of three secondary students, selected from schools Australia-wide. Students explore current issues and develop interview skills in workshops at Parliament House and the National Museum of Australia. Their interviews are then recorded in the Museum's Studio in front of a student audience and broadcast on ABC's FlyTV.

Applications are now open for students age 16 years and over wanting to take part in Talkback Classroom during semester 2. For more info see

<http://www.abc.net.au/flytv>.

Want to improve your understanding and skills with young people?

For anyone who works with young people it's time to start thinking about applying for the mid-year Distance Education intake for the Graduate Diploma in Adolescent Health & Welfare run by the Centre for Adolescent Health and the University of Melbourne.

Of all the age groups in Australia, young people are the only group whose health has not improved over the past three decades. The Centre for Adolescent Health asserts that a key way of

improving young people's health is for workers with young people to be skilled and knowledgeable in adolescent health. Through the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne and Department of Paediatrics, the Centre has established a Graduate Diploma/Certificate in Adolescent Health and Welfare to address this need.

The Graduate Diploma/Certificate in Adolescent Health and Welfare is a multi-disciplinary forum where you can share knowledge, network and study areas of particular interest to you. The course exposes students to a variety of theories, perspectives and experts in adolescent health and welfare. For more information see <http://www.rch.org.au/cah>.

FairWear Day

Free Dress for FairWear 28 April – 2 May.

The last edition of *YIKES!* profiled the Fair School Wear campaign which works towards justice for Outworkers in Australia. Outworkers are mostly women who make clothes in the home for as little as \$2 to \$3 an hour. They often work up to 18 hours a day 7 days a week. Outworkers make clothes for our markets, shops and increasingly now are making the school uniforms we wear to school. It is estimated that there are 300,000 outworkers in Australia today.

During the week beginning Monday 28 April until Friday 2 May schools will choose a day to contribute to the campaign for justice for Outworkers in Australia. Schools across Victoria will join together to make a simple gesture about the conditions Outworkers still face in Australia. All schools are invited to join this exciting cross campus week of activities and to focus on this issue in ways that best suit your school.

The campaign invites your school community to raise awareness of the situation of these women as message of hope and that change is possible. Wear free dress on one day during this week and donate a dollar.

To register or for more information contact the FairWear Victoria office on (03) 9251 5270. ■

At Platform young people are involved in all aspects of the organisation from coming up with acting, directing and writing performances; technical work such as lighting and set design; and, they have recently developed their constitution to ensure that young people are on the management committee.

Q&A with Fiona DiBerardino, Marline Zaibak and Kath Melbourne of

Platform Youth Theatre



Continued from page 1

Marline is the Platform Chairperson and Fiona is an active member of the company. Both have been involved in Platform since its inception five years ago. Alex Markham had a chat with the two along with Platform Co-ordinator Kath Melbourne to find out more.

A: What is Platform Youth Theatre?

M: Platform is a Darebin Based youth theatre company that is slowly branching out. It's run and looked after by the Darebin City Council but we are trying to get out on our own feet, which is really important.

A: What's it about?

M: We're about the vibe, we're about the hub! We're about the lurve! We about young people trying to have a creative outlet for their work, and their imagination and their stuff.

A: Are the same people involved as when you started?

M: No we've changed, a few of us have been there from the beginning, which is great and we've got to do what set out to do which is acting. We've been supported through the

whole thing and there have been a few different people who have come in to help out with different shows and different workshops.

F: There's a good base now. The people involved are in it for the long term, but we're always looking for new people to get involved.

A: Who's involved?

K: We have about 30 participatory members aged under 26. There's also 20 associate members who are aged over 26.

M: It's really varied, different types of people, different schools and needs and that's what's really good about Platform, we really try and cater for that. I think on our membership list there's about 15 different nationalities.

A: How long have you been involved?

M: Since the first play in 1998, *Platform*, Fiona and I both did that.

A: How did you get involved?

M: Through the local newspaper. I went to the meeting and you (Fiona) were there!

F: And I was like what are you doing here! We didn't talk much back then.

M: Nah not really

A: What do you get out of platform? What do you hope to achieve through your performances?

M: We want a Gucci deal and a BMW! Nah just joking... but fame and fortune would be ace.

F: I think we both wanna get our foot in the door somewhere. We want to have fun and we want exposure for youth theatre generally.

M: And we also want to work in our industry! Platform has really helped with that.

A: Do you think everyone in Platform is there because they want to be actors?

M: Nah, one of the girls is there cause she enjoys acting, it's just a fun thing for her to do.

K: There's some people who don't want act but are interested in getting involved in the arts in some way like in the Tech Program there's people who seriously want to get into teaching or writing or arts admin.

M: I'm a bit over acting... Fame got to my head a bit.

F: Yeah, especially when Home and Away approached you, you felt like you weren't quite ready for this (joking).

M: Yes I wasn't sure if they were ready to expose some ethnicity into these quality Australian dramas!

A: Describe the process of putting a production together. What are the different roles people take?

M: I can tell you about *Waltz in Paradise Plaza*. That was pretty hands on in every department. We had the written pieces; they were written by Michael Carmody and another one was written by Amber Pritchard. So we had these pieces and we had \$5,000 to put on a show. So first things first, we see if anyone's interested in doing it, tell them what it's about, and get the directors...

K: Can I rewind a bit and explain where the money came from? It came from a grant, we

were doing a youth audience research survey; we got some money to test it out, and we said well "what's the best way to test it out?", and that's to actually do a production. Give young people the money and see what happens in terms of gathering an audience in when young people are directly involved in, and are steering, every aspect of the production. It's kind of a sneaky way of doing it but it worked!

A: \$5,000 isn't that much for a production is it?

M: We used all of our connections. If we met someone who did set design stuff and they were young, we conned them into getting involved. It was great, we had two set designers and a lighting designer who all knew what they were doing but hadn't ever had a chance to completely do everything on their own. And this was their chance. For instance you had me, Michael Carmody and Justine Beltram who had never really directed a piece that was going to be shown and we got that opportunity. We all really wanted to show off! It was like, "hello my first directing debut, so I'm gonna make it something". That's what drove the whole thing. Then you had all the actors who were so excited.

K: We were really hands off, I mean I gave Michael checklists to make sure that this is done and that's done.

A: Is that the first time that workers at Platform have been so hands off?

M: Yep it was completely our own thing and it was a sell-out show.

F: I loved it... Everyone loved it.

K: 80% of the audience were young people.

M: It was a fantastic piece.

A: Does that happen very often in youth theatre - that total control is given to young people?

K: There's some, but often youth theatre involved professional artists with an existing script for young people to do, or it's working in partnership to create a script, which is primarily how it works at Platform.

M: In other performances we've done we are involved in making decisions but this one was different because we wrote the pieces. We had dramaturges teaching us how to get the best out of our pieces, which fantastic because wouldn't have succeeded if we didn't have that guidance first.

A: Tell us about your committee of management. How many young people are on it?

M: There's 13 people on the committee and 8 positions are reserved for young people. And that's in the constitution.

K: There's also an under 18's development officer to develop our membership with this age group and to liaise with all sorts of institutions such as refuges and school groups.

A: So is that recognising that young people under 18 are less likely to get involved?

M: Yeah and also I think that they feel intimidated to be on boards and stuff.

" I hear so many people complaining about some organisations that are a bunch of 70 year olds telling you how they wanted things when they were your age. It's just not on! "

M: Cause it is scary.

K: But having a young person like Marline as the Chairperson cuts through some of that!

A: So what kinds of things do you do to make the committee meeting more accessible to young people?

M: It's really laid back, and we encourage everyone to have their say.

K: Some of the language is a bit tricky when it comes to talking about the constitution... it's designed to be intimidating.

M: I'm trying to get my head around our constitution so that I can take it back to the group and explain it... it's a really technical yucky way to say stuff.

A: Do you have any advice for committees wanting to have young people as members?

K: Meeting times are always going to be hard cause no one has the same schedule. Usually we make sure we finish at 8:30 and no later. And meetings are always near public transport routes, which is important.

A: So how did it come about having young people on your committee?

M: It's the only way to do it. We're a youth theatre company!

M: I hear so many people complaining about some organisations that are a bunch of 70 year olds telling you how they wanted things when they were your age! It's just not on! Now we finally have a chance to do things our own way, and support ourselves and to run our own theatre company and that's... the bomb!

K: It's also not just about having young people on the committee. Everyone around the table has a particular viewpoint that is valuable to contribute. Everyone involved is totally different, be it writers, actors or techies. Participation is important, not just because they're young but because they've been there since day dot, they know Platform back to front and they own it.

M: Everyone knows what's going on, they have a clue. The reason that we've gotten this far is because we want Platform to kick off and show the world how good we are.

A: Why do you think the arts are important for young people?

F: It's something different. It's a separation from work or study or school and it involves your creative side, which is fun. It's a form of expression. The theatre is professional, but if it doesn't have to be about money, some people can take it seriously and some people just do it for fun. It's also a distraction from things that young people can get into; it keeps them occupied. I hate to say it but it's important to have that. I mean you get bored and what do you do... you get up to no good!

A: Do you have any advice for young people wanting to get involved?

F: Go for it! You learn a lot about yourself, I really came out of my shell. That's not crap talk, I know this from personal experience.

M: I used to be a little shy girl who would not speak out. Now I'm confident in myself and with everything around me... it's just given me this overwhelming sense of self.

Community groups are really good 'cause you learn to accept your background and your culture. I was always anti being my nationality and was trying to conform to the whole Australian thing and now I'm such the wog girl that I am, and I like it!

F: Being able to work with other people who were proud of the heritage and very accepting of it was great!

A: How do you get involved in Platform?

F: It's easy, contact the coordinator, get on our website get involved in one of the workshops or one of the programs. And then kaboom you're part of the family!

For more info on Platform Youth Theatre see <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/arts/platform.html> or call Kath Melbourne on (03) 9230 4376

Participation in Practice

The Participation in Practice Project is running full steam ahead. Various organisations and individuals have expressed interest in the project and offered invaluable insights into young people's participation in their communities. The focus of the project at the moment is the production of the initial handbook - 'Young people and consultation - asking young people about their ideas and opinions.' It will discuss ways in which consultation with young people can happen and provide some practical consultation tools to help in planning, carrying out and evaluating a consultation.

The project is being steered by a reference group of young people and workers who bring their expertise to the table. Jen has been consulting far and wide, with both organisations and young people about their experiences of consultations and learning some lessons from their experience.

The project will keep moving along throughout the year, with consultations being conducted and resources being written along the way. If anyone has an interest in learning more about the project or contributing to it, contact Jen Rose, Participation in Practice Project worker on 9612 8920 or email jrose@yacvic.org.au. ■

What's new at YACVic?

Joint youth homelessness project update

The need to develop improved responses to young people who are homeless is considered a key priority by services and peak bodies working with young people. In a joint initiative YACVic, the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria and Council to Homeless Persons, have established a 12 month position to address the complex issues of youth homelessness.

This position will enable the community sector and young people to have full participation and engagement with the development and implementation of the Victorian Youth Homelessness Action Plan.

The position will help to build stronger networks between the many community organisations and government departments that deal with youth homelessness. It will also assist to raise awareness of issues facing homeless young people to the broader public. If you have any thoughts or personal experiences you would like to share around this issue Meg Mundell would love to hear from you. Email her on meg@chp.org.au. ■

YACVic goes international: Our Young Media Spokesperson's morning with Cherie Blair

On Tuesday, 15 April Cherie Blair, wife of the British PM Tony, addressed the Mental Health Foundation of Australia's fundraising luncheon. YACVic's Young Media Spokesperson was invited to chat with her before the event. Lise Dalla Torre found her down to earth and good humoured, showing interest in the role of YACVic and our policy influence, while joking that the best way to influence a politician was to marry one.

At the luncheon Cherie spoke passionately and engagingly about women and human rights, drawing on her considerable legal knowledge to colour and validate her views. The crowd was littered with familiar faces such as Sir Gustav Nossel, Simon Crean, Joan Kirner and Rachel Griffiths, as well as the Federal Shadow Minister from Youth Affairs, Nicola Roxon.

Overall, it was an enjoyable day in which yet another public figure was granted a human face. ■

United Nations Environment Programme Global Youth Retreat

The third United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Youth Retreat was held at the United Nations Office in Nairobi, Kenya from 29 January – 8 February 2003.

The retreat brought together 50 leaders of environmental youth organisations from around the world (including YACVic Youth Reference Group member Alan Wu) with a focus on examining UNEP's work with young people both globally and regionally. As the Retreat coincided with the 22nd UNEP Governing Council, it provided young people with an opportunity to review issues that were to be discussed at the Council and present recommendations on them to the 60 plus Environment Ministers present.

Of particular interest to young people was the council's consideration of the UNEP long-term strategy on engagement and involvement of young people in environmental issues. After spending several months in the drafting stage, the strategy – finally adopted with minor amendments – formalises UNEP's long-running commitment to working with young people through its UNEP Youth Advisory Council and biennial Global Youth Retreat and Global Youth Forum (held in alternating years). Additionally, it requests the UNEP Executive

Director to seek further funding to ensure its continued operation, and invites governments to provide extra budgetary resources.

YACVic Youth Reference Group Member Alan Wu, who recently served as Youth Representative on the Australian Delegation to the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development, was elected to the UNEP Youth Advisory Council. "Environmental sustainability remains a huge challenge in an over-consuming society like ours. With the recent adoption of the Youth Strategy, UNEP has created great opportunities to be involved with UN work in the area, and I'd definitely encourage other young people to take advantage of them."

Luckily enough, Australia will be the first nation to host an event falling under the new Youth Strategy. Eco-Innovate '03 will be held in Sydney from 14-18 July, and will provide a forum for learning about the ways young people can develop innovative ideas on sustainability and turn these 'eco-innovations' into viable applications. For more information, visit the event website at <http://www.eco-innovate.net/>.

The next UNEP Global Youth Retreat is scheduled for 2005. For further news on the event, as well as information on previous UNEP youth activities, visit the UNEP Children and Youth Website at http://www.unep.org/children_youth/. ■

In the spotlight



Members of the panel included (l-r) Michael Gawenda (The Age), Nichola Quin (DHS), Lee Burton (Children's TV Foundation) and Lise Dalla Torre (YACVic)

Other media professionals on the panel included, Campbell Fuller Deputy Editor of MX magazine; Herald Sun Youth Reporter, Russell Gould and Lee Burton from the Australian Children's Television Foundation.

To provide a different perspective there were also people from government and the community sector including David Murray, Youth Substance Abuse Service plus YACVic's own Lise Dalla Torre, Young Spokesperson and Janet Jukes, Executive Officer.

As the scenario developed - from initial reports at the scene of the accident, to revelations that there was underage drinking involved and the implications this might have on public policy - all of these people

mashed together to provide an interesting take on how a media story unfolds.

"There were some interesting, and some naive responses from the audience", said Jo, "like, 'why are stories about young people often negative?' or 'why does so much 'youth' stereotyping occur in the media?' ".

Why do they indeed? While *In the Spotlight* couldn't possibly begin to answer these complex questions we hope that members of the media who took part have a little more of an understanding of the lives of young people; and that the young people who came along have a little more of an understanding of how the media works.

The second part of the day was much more skills focused with a range of workshops covering topics such as managing the media, communicating your message, making a media complaint, freelance journalism, ethnic broadcasting, community television and radio and how to put together your own zine.

YACVic would like to extend a big thanks to the Centre for Adolescent Health; City of Port Phillip; and the Inner City Regional Youth Committee for their generous support in putting on the forum. ■



JPET Update

The Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) program is aimed at assisting students and unemployed young people aged 15-21 years who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The JPET program is in the government's frontline of service delivery to significantly disadvantaged young Australians. It has been providing a holistic model of service delivery and life enhancing outcomes for young people and their families for many years.

As many of you may be aware, last year there was a major shakeup of the JPET program nationally and a formal complaint was lodged with the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) about the 2002 funding allocation process.

An independent review of the process was undertaken and the review team released a report and recommendations earlier this year. Overall, the review raised a number of issues about the probity of the previous business allocation process and as a result the review team recommended that FaCS discontinue the process and roll over current funding June 30th 2004.

This rollover will enable FaCS to work with JPET providers and the broader sector to develop a new process. FaCS has already instigated ongoing consultations to seek sector views on a way forward with JPET. Some of the issues that YACVic believes should be addressed in these consultations include how a needs analysis is undertaken, how to address unmet need and how funding allocation processes can be improved in the future.

YACVic would like to acknowledge the responsiveness of FaCS who recognised the legitimate concerns of a wide variety of JPET and youth sector organisations, acted swiftly to investigate and assess those concerns, and have tried to ensure that young people in JPET services are not further disrupted by the this process.

The review report and the FaCS response can be found at <http://www.facs.gov.au>. ■

Paying attention to self



It isn't that I want to reject him but that my heart can't hold the two images together.

It isn't like my parents are fighting or my dogs just died, they're ok reasons to be sad, to want to cry. People understand, not like my secret. No - one understands.

What is it with him? There aren't two standards for people to live by, only one.

I'm sick of this, it is so unpredictable, one day he's fine, just like everyone else's dad. We can do stuff together, it's cool.

But next day or even the next hour or minute it isn't. I hate it. It controls my life, like the bells at school, but without the pattern.

Anon

Young people can experience a wide range of emotions and reactions to having a parent with a mental illness. The Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital, developed the Paying Attention to Self (PATS) Program in 1997, in response to the identified lack of support and resources for adolescents whose parents have mental health issues.

In PATS it is recognised that mental illness not only affects the parent who is ill, but raises many issues for their children, particularly during adolescence. PATS is a mental health promotion and illness prevention program.

Target group

PATS is targeted to young people aged 13 – 18 years who have a parent affected by a mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression and anxiety disorders.

PATS model

PATS is a peer support program which aims to provide young people who have parents with mental health issues with the opportunity to share their experiences and be supported by other young people in a situation similar to their own. The objective is to increase the young people's knowledge of mental health and illness, to improve their help seeking behaviour and coping strategies, and to improve their sense of connection to their peers, family and community.

Peer support groups

The core focus of PATS is the peer support groups. Groups are made of six to eight young people who meet weekly for eight weeks. The groups are facilitated by a peer leader (a young person whose parent has a mental illness) and a health professional.

Topics covered in the group include:

- Understanding their parents illness;
- improving their relationship with their parent;
- communication and problem solving skills;
- dealing with the stigma associated with mental health;
- strategies to cope with their parent's condition and to stay mentally healthy themselves;
- the focus is on healthy thinking and healthy coping strategies;
- group activities include discussion, games, role-plays, art and craft, guest speakers and social outings.

Peer leadership training

PATS Peer Leadership Training is held regularly at the Centre for Adolescent Health and throughout Victoria.

The training covers such areas as peer support, mental illness, communication skills, group dynamics, leadership skills, public speaking and activity planning. Leadership training gives the opportunity for the young people to further develop their skills and confidence.

A Peer Support Program for young people whose parent is affected by a mental illness

Co-leadership

The role of the peer leader is a crucial component of the PATS program. The peer leader is responsible for the social aspects of the groups, organising activities and getting the participants mixing and talking. They act as a positive role model for the participants and are able to share their own experiences and coping strategies with the participants.

Peer leaders are provided opportunities to educate the community and advocate on behalf of other young people through speaking at conferences and co-facilitating workshops with a health professional. The centre believes strongly in young people being given opportunities to express their views and contribute to discussions that pertain to their lives.

PATS socials

Each school term social and recreational activities are held for PATS participants to take part in. These provide the opportunity to continue friendships and support after the eight-week group has been completed. Four social activities are held each year.

What do young people gain from being in PATS?

“At PATS I met other teenagers in the same situation as me. It didn't make my parent well but it helped me understand more about their illness. I learnt that how I feel is important too and that there are other people out there going through the same thing and I had a bit of fun along the way” (past participant).

“... PATS allowed me to realise that it's OK to be confused and even angry at times because there is only so much you can take and talking to other kids and hearing their stories and finding out they too get upset and can't understand what's happening around them and PATS also helped because it wasn't some EXPERT giving his/her opinion. It was kids telling honest stories and sharing solutions.

... I'm now learning to cope with the changes mental illness can bring on a family and at the same time coming up with my own solutions” (Shane).

Current dissemination and evaluation of PATS

The Centre for Adolescent Health has disseminated the PATS program to five sites in Victoria: Parkville, Lilydale, Horsham, Shepparton and Bentleigh. Funding has been received from the Department of Human Services, VicHealth and BeyondBlue to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of the program and it's dissemination over the next three years. Groups are also being run in St Albans and Melton in terms two and three this year.

For further information about the PATS Program please contact:

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Lilydale

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About the Centre for Adolescent Health

The Centre for Adolescent Health was established in 1992 with support from the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and the William Buckland Trust. It was given a broad mandate to develop a knowledge base for Adolescent Health aiming to improve the health and well being of young people from 10 - 24 years of age. The centres core work includes the provision of:

- Clinical services
- Community Programs
- Education and training
- Health promotional programs in settings relevant for young people
- Research into health risk behaviours and factors which protect young people from harm.

For more info see

<http://www.rch.org.au/cah>

Young People's Health Service

The Centre for Adolescent Health run the Young People's Health Service at Frontyard, 19 King Street, Melbourne. They have a free drop in night service Wednesday evenings 5.30 – 8pm and can help young people with any health issues including:

- Drug and alcohol
- Testing for hepatitis B and C, HIV and other infections
- Skin problems, rashes, foot problems
- Pregnancy and parenting
- Immunizations
- Aches and pains

They have friendly nurses available to help young people with their health, whatever it takes.

For more information contact the Young People's Health Service on (03) 9611 2409 .

Bayside Youth Linkages

by Maureen Fischer

Recreation, the opportunity to join a group, to meet new people, to have fun, to succeed and learn new things are all important activities; especially when young people are making their transition to adulthood. The Bayside Youth Linkages Project is based on the evidence that participation in, and a sense of belonging to, a supportive community results in lower rates of drug misuse and harm among young people. This is in line with the objectives of the Victorian Government's *Community Strengthening Initiative*.



Bayside Youth Linkages is a universally targeted, primary drug prevention strategy. It targets large numbers of young people, in a broad range of environments, to support their engagement in local sport and recreation opportunities. By strengthening these links between young people, schools, recreation providers and youth services, the project is addressing well-documented risk factors that lead to young people engaging in drug use, anti-social and criminal behaviour.

The municipality of Bayside is located in the metropolitan area of Melbourne and includes the suburbs of Beaumaris, Sandringham, Highett and Brighton. In the initial stages of the project (2001) 315 young people from Bayside aged 10 – 25 were surveyed to identify their recreation patterns and barriers to their participation. The results indicated that 30% of the young people surveyed were not involved in any recreation opportunities. Barriers to young peoples participation included time restrictions, transport difficulties, costs and a lack of knowledge about opportunities available.

Now is an exciting time for the Bayside Youth Linkages Program. A lot of work has gone into establishing links between young people and recreation providers within Bayside. This work has resulted in the delivery of free local "taste test" activities to many young people. The aim is to make it convenient for young people to experience activities within their community and become further involved if they choose.

Between June and October 2002, 18 activities were delivered to young people including dance, yoga, karate, life saving, air force cadets, cricket, tai chi and more. These activities have been delivered in primary and secondary schools, youth and community centres, as a part of school curriculum, youth fun days, youth programs and holiday programs.

One example of a "taste test" activity has been with Sandringham East Primary School. The school wanted their students to try activities they normally wouldn't have the opportunity to try. Local recreation providers were then invited to come to the school to run these

activities. At the end of each session young people filled out an evaluation form and received information about how to get further involved in the activity outside of school.

The evaluation forms indicated that many young people had never tried the activity before the session. Some enjoyed the activity and some didn't. Also, most young people wrote that they would now feel more comfortable approaching the recreation providers to get further involved.

Another component of the program is the support and skill development of recreation groups. Newsletters are sent to recreation groups updating them on the program and highlighting resources and information that could potentially translate to more youth friendly recreation providers. The program will also offer training to groups in areas such as "understanding the nature of adolescents" and "creative marketing to young people".

Other strategies in this project will include the development of a local "youth friendly" recreation directory for young people, providing support to youth and recreation providers, community members and individual young people.

It is envisaged that by creating these links and opportunities within the community, young people will have a greater sense of community connectedness and therefore be less likely to engage in drug and alcohol use. Initial outcomes have been exciting and encouraging. Clubs involved have written that they feel more supported to engage with young people, young people have been experiencing activities they have never tried before and Bayside Youth Services has gained a wealth of local support.

For more information please contact Maureen Fischer, Youth Information and Linkages Officer at Bayside City Council on (03) 9599 4493.

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<http://druginfo.adf.org.au/> ■

Put **YOUNG** people ON the Agenda

Gain invaluable access to a

WHAT TYPE OF MEMBER AM I?

state-wide network of young

► Organisational Members

people, organisations and individuals who work with young people... join YACVIC!

Organisations entitled to become members of YACVIC will be organisations that are generally concerned with direct service delivery for and with young people or organisations run by young people. Organisations that are concerned purely with policy formulation will not be entitled to join as organisational members. Organisations are defined as a legal entity. Each organisation is entitled to join once. Additional membership is available for service streams or regional offices. Local Government Youth Services are entitled to become organisational members. **Voting entitlement:** A maximum of two votes at any general meeting of the Council

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

At YACVIC we:

► **Listen to the needs of young people,** workers with young people and organisations that provide direct services to young people.

► **Provide advice** to the **government** and other institutions about these needs.

► Associate members

► **Analyse and develop policy** through **consultation** with our members.

Associate members are generally organisations whose main function is to formulate policy. An associate member of YACVIC is any political party, federal government department, state government department, local government council or local government policy unit. **Voting entitlement:** not entitled to vote

► **Provide our members** with **information** through our regular printed newsletter YIKES! our email announcement list and our website.

► Additional members

YACVIC is governed by a volunteer board and managed by a paid secretary. We are a not-for-profit organisation and our core funding comes from the Victorian Government's Office for Youth.

A service stream, regional or local affiliate of a larger umbrella organisation which is an Organisational Member of YACVIC. **Voting entitlement:** One vote at any general meeting of the Council.

► Individual members

Having an active youth peak body in Victoria with a strong membership base means that your issues will be heard!

Any member of the public is entitled to apply for membership of the Council. Young people and those working for and with young people are particularly encouraged to join YACVIC. **Voting entitlement:** One vote at any general meeting of the Council.

Address: Level 6, 1 Elizabeth St, Melbourne 3000 **Ph:** (03) 9612 8999 **Fax:** (03) 9620 4802

Email: info@yacvic.org.au **Website:** www.yacvic.org.au

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc. ABN: 39 774 045 170

MEMBERSHIP FORM : TAX INVOICE

This form is for new members only. If you are already a YACVIC member, renewals are sent out on 1 July every year.

youthaffairs
COUNCIL OF VICTORIA INC.

Title First Name Surname Position

Organisation Name Approx No of members in organisation

Address

Suburb/Town State Postcode

Phone Number Fax Number Mobile

Email Website address

I/We agree to the purpose and objectives listed* and hereby apply for membership to the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc.

Signature Date

Fees (all prices are GST inclusive)

Organisational		
<input type="checkbox"/> Member with annual income less than \$50,000		\$55.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Member with annual income more than \$50,000		\$120.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Associate Member (no voting rights)		\$120.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional Member		\$55.00

Individual

<input type="checkbox"/> Member		\$55.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Member — Concession		\$15.00

Payment: Total amount paid: \$

Cheque or money order payable to Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc.

Credit Card: Visa Mastercard Bankcard

Name on Card:

Card number

Expiry date / Signature

Areas of policy interest

So that we can actively involve you in our policy discussions please tick one or more boxes:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts, recreation and leisure | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer and finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Multiculturalism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> The law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education and training | <input type="checkbox"/> Rural |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance use |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Young women |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth participation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Media and technology | |

If you are under 25 and would like to be involved in our youth consultation processes tick here

The changing face of surf life saving

The bronzed, blonde Aussie male life saver with broad shoulders is out: the 15-year-old female life saver from the Balkans is in! Her name is Melina and on her first day on patrol at Ocean Grove beach, she had to carry out a rescue and resuscitation. Thanks to the efforts of Surf Life Saving Victoria, with funding from VicHealth, young people from various cultural backgrounds are now patrolling our surf beaches.

Melina is among the first group of 'graduates' from the Ocean Grove-based program. Numerous barriers had to be overcome before these young people could even begin to consider entering the surf life saving program.

For starters, most of them could not swim.

Many of the participants spoke limited English and most of their parents could not read English well enough to understand the permission slips. Some had never seen a beach and had no concept of surf and its dangers, or where Ocean Grove was. Others had no transport to get there.

Overcoming barriers to participation is a major focus of VicHealth's *Together We Do Better* campaign which was launched in Melbourne on April 2, 2003.

Active participation in a range of activities and groups can help build our connections or bonds to other people. Evidence shows that social networks have a positive impact on our mental health. Factors which promote and protect young people's mental wellbeing include strong parental relationships, a sense of belonging, good social skills and supportive networks.

Surf Life Saving Victoria Project officer, Damien Dour, said it was important to encourage youth participation in a wide range of activities. "The project highlighted numerous barriers to participation, but the results had been extremely rewarding," Mr Dour said. "The pride shows all over their faces – faces which have not been associated before with Aussie surf life saving."

"The hope now is that the program will have spin-off benefits, with the young people able to educate their peers about the dangers and unpredictability of the surf."

VicHealth CEO, Dr Rob Moodie, said the project was a prime example of a sporting association working to overcome participation barriers to a broader group of people.

"Evidence shows clearly that social connections are a strong protective measure against depression. Belonging and being made to feel welcome are essential for good mental health."

For more information see <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au>. ■

