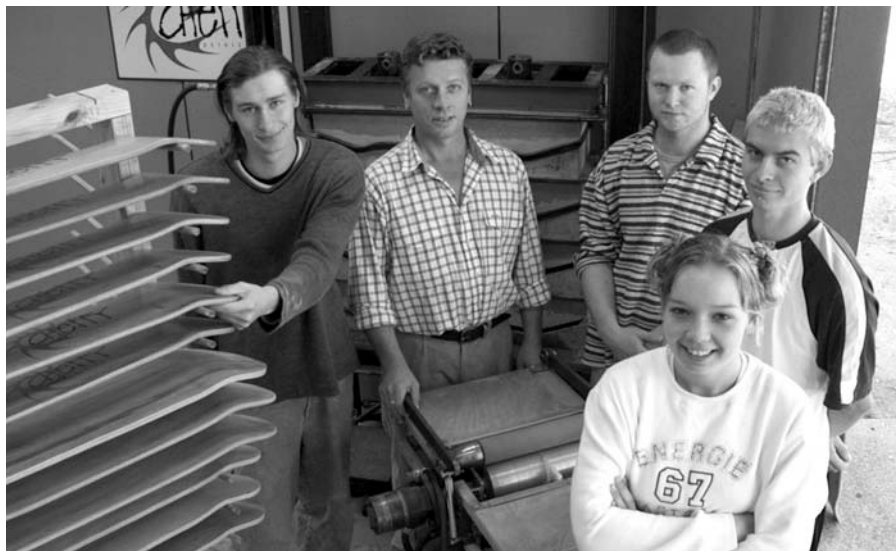


YUWKES!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA INC.

SK8 into the future!



With approximately 30,000 skateboard decks made from imported timbers landing on Australia's shores every month, the SK8 initiative is a fantastic demonstration of youth entrepreneurship in action.

It is a creative way of stemming the flood of imports by offering an Australian hardwood deck that has been designed and made by young people.

'We're probably up to Mark 20 in our design work, but the end product – which is the only Australian product we know of – is becoming genuinely competitive with the best of the international decks available in the market place,' according to SK8 Project Co-ordinator Glenn Bury.

Working closely with Force Industries, a snowboard manufacturer and skateboard importer, the SK8 crew have been steadily developing their business enterprise since late 2000.

An innovation of Neil Smith from The Centre for Small Rural Communities, the project

sought to create sustainable employment opportunities for young people.

The initiative recognised that many young people who do not get their needs met in the conventional school system can't slot into the traditional VCE framework. With few options available to isolated young people, Neil figured there had to be a niche market that provided training and employment outside the school system, so he began to talk to a range of people about what that niche may be.

The idea relied on a premise that young people who don't fit into mainstream education still had enormous talent; the challenge was to harness it in a framework that inspired them. By developing the

Continued page 5

Insurance Reform Bill

By Sarah Nicholson, Youth Law

Legislation is currently before Parliament which, if passed, will have two major effects on young people's right to sue.

Limitation periods are a prescribed maximum amount of time in which a person can make a claim for damages in our courts. The limitation period for personal injury actions for 'minors' is currently six years from the age of majority (18 years). The Bill alters the limitation period for 'minors' to six years from the date of 'discoverability' of the injury. This means that if an eight year old suffers a personal injury, which satisfies the proposed threshold requirements, they have until the age of 14 to initiate a personal injury claim, rather than the age of 24 (18 + 6 years) as it is currently.

As children and young people under the age of 18 do not have the capacity to make a claim in their own name, a parent or

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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

news in brief

Western Young People's Independent Network (WYPIN) has moved

Due to the closure of the Inner Western Region Migrant Resource Centre, as of Monday 2 June, the WYPIN will now operate from Melbourne City Mission, 214 Nicholson Street, Footscray, 3011. The phone number has changed to (03) 9687 4997. Despite the move the Western Young People's Independent Network is continuing to operate and provide programs as usual. WYPIN wishes to thank the Melbourne City Mission for their support in providing WYPIN with office space at short notice, and the other services and individuals who have expressed support and assistance.

WYPIN can be contacted on (03) 9687 4997 or via email: ypin@vicnet.net.au

Social Policy Congress 03

14 & 15 August 2003.

Mid August will see the third instalment of the highly successful VCOSS Social Policy Congress. Over one hundred individual papers were presented at Congress 02, all of a high standard, and all focusing on ways forward across social, environmental and economic policy areas, with many having an emphasis on strategies for strengthening whole of government policy responses. The agenda for the Congress is set by the sector via the abstracts received, but may encompass broad themes including community wellbeing, human rights, citizenship, partnerships, rural and regional areas, community building, poverty; specific policy areas such as health, education, housing, disability; and issues relating to groups experiencing particular disadvantage, including Indigenous Australians, women, refugees, young people. Registrations were full on each of the

three days of last year's Congress, so make sure that your registrations get in early. The program and registration will be available from 18 June.

To register or for further information contact Carolyn Atkins.
Ph (03) 9654 5050 Email: carolyn.atkins@vcoss.org.au
<http://www.vcoss.org.au/events.htm>

Just and Vibrant Communities

9th Biennial National Conference
Local Government Community Services Association of Australia (LGCSAA) 28-30 July 2003

Just and Vibrant Communities is about community and cultural development and planning that ensures sustainable long-term benefits to the development of communities, so that they are just and fair, vibrant and creative. Five themes have been identified as core to the Conference:

- Is integrated community planning a foundation for sustainable communities?
- Social Capital – what are the benefits for local communities?
- How does the contribution of arts, culture and diversity assist in building vibrant communities?
- How can local communities strengthen just outcomes and human rights?
- Is the emphasis on efficiency and corporatisation impacting on local democracy, community development and community services?

Please visit the LGCSAA website for full details including Call for Papers, sponsorship opportunities, important dates and accommodation options.

For further information contact Marie Noy. Phone: (07) 3000 2258
Email: events@lgaq.asn.au
<http://www.lgcsaa.org.au>

Urban Tripper

Environment Victoria is distributing a new multimedia resource for young people aged 14 – 18 years old. The program is called 'Urban Tripper', and is an educational and humorous resource for young people about sustainable transport and the environmental, health, social and financial benefits it can bring. Urban Tripper is comprised of interactive CD Roms, posters and, at a small charge, t-shirts. The CDs and posters are free, and you'll get a taste of them from the website of Urban Tripper

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

If your youth centre has a computer/s available for youth access or if you have a lending facility, and you'd like to get hold of a few Urban Tripper CDs and posters, please send requests to: Rachel Carlisle, Sustainable Transport Coordinator – Environment Victoria. PO Box 12575, Melbourne Vic 8006. Ph (03) 9341 8100

The end of Fly TV

It's official – the ABC is closing its multichannel networks Fly TV and ABC Kids due to funding constraints. FLY was the ABC's digital TV channel for young Australians. Mr Balding, the Managing Director of the ABC, blames the closure of the two networks on the Federal Government, saying that the government has ignored the ABC's request for extra funding in last month's Budget, in the full knowledge that it would have a negative impact on ABC programming. Fly TV will stop broadcasting from June 30. There is currently an online petition to save Fly TV.

<http://www.petitiononline.com/kidsfly/>

National Youth Parliament 2003

Planning has begun for the 2003 National Youth Parliament program. Nominations are now being called for

taskforce members who will help develop the program. Held in Canberra, the program hopes to attract 120 young people between the ages 15 to 18 from around Australia. Sixteen teams of six people will be formed. There will be at least one team selected from each state and territory. These teams will formulate Legislative Bills reflecting the opinions of young people. Members will spend approximately six months developing their Bills, and in this time will also engage in parliamentary education. At the end of this bill preparation period, youth parliament members will meet in Canberra for five days during August. Members will debate their Bills following the Westminster system. Youth parliamentarians will attempt to imitate the 'real thing' as closely as possible, and have Members, Senators and Ministers presiding over the proceedings. After the two days of debate, there will be a closing ceremony, where the Bills passed by the Youth Parliament will be presented to an appropriate Member of Parliament, who will disseminate the Bills among relevant State and Federal Ministers. For more information see

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

From the Inside: Children's Lives in Immigration Detention Centres

'For just one hour in the morning we come out of the room to see the sky and one hour in the afternoon. And then the doors closed, locked in.'
(Unaccompanied teenage boy)

Ask the Children – Kids Speak Out About Immigration Detention is a new publication produced by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People. It provides an extraordinary account of children's experiences of coming to Australia as refugees, their treatment within immigration detention centres and their views on

how detention can be improved. The *Ask the Children* publication focuses on children who have been recognised under Australian and international law as refugees and who spent an average 140 days in immigration detention during 2000 and 2001. The children were originally interviewed as part of a submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's national inquiry into children living in immigration detention. They participated in the project in the hope that things would change for the better. The publication is one of very few that allows us to hear about refugee children's experiences in their own words. *Ask the Children – Kids Speak Out About Immigration Detention* is being sent to people and organisations to raise awareness about the children's unique and frequently traumatic experiences. It is hoped that children's views will be considered in future policies about asylum seeker children and Australia will conform with our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To order copies of the publication telephone (02) 9286 7276 or visit the Commission's website at <http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/ourwork/immigrationdetention.html>

Arabic Youth Network

Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) is providing young people with an opportunity to meet other Arabic young people of both genders from a cross section of the community. If you are 16 to 25 years old they would like you to be a part of it! The Arabic Youth Network will be meeting for a social gathering on: Wednesday 2 July, 6pm – 9pm at Darebin Shire Hall, 286 Gower Street Preston. Refreshments will be provided. Call the VASS office on 9309 055. ■

Continued from front page

guardian must commence the action for them. In reality this means that while a young person can suffer injuries, under the proposed legislation, they cannot ever make a claim for compensation for their injuries on their own behalf, unless they are at least 12 at the date of 'discoverability'. Only parents will be able to make the claim, and if they chose not to, then the child or young person gets absolutely no compensation at all.

Not all children have the advantage of a responsible parent or guardian to care for their best interests. There are any number of reasons why parents might not commence a claim for compensation on behalf of their child: they may not think to, they may not know they have to do it on behalf of the child, they may not be able to afford to or have had a bad experience with the law themselves.

In addition, families often do not start legal proceedings immediately after a child is injured because it may take time to determine the full extent of the child's injuries. The injury may be 'discovered', but the full extent may not be realised until the child is older (which may be longer than six years). For example, disabilities relating to speech will not be evident until after the child reaches the stage where speech is fully developed.

A common law claim of this kind is a once and for all claim. A child or young person cannot return to the courts and claim more

compensation if he or she develops greater disabilities as a result of a defendant's negligence.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, provides that:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

The Bill clearly trespasses upon this fundamental right by removing the opportunity for children and young people to decide whether or not to commence legal action for injuries, which may have the effect of removing access to compensation for injuries sustained through no fault of their own.

The only appropriate protection for children and young people is that they are not subject to limitation periods which begin to run before they are 18. In at least two states, Queensland and South Australia, where similar reforms have been introduced, the

existing limitation period for children and young people has been maintained.

Claims for Damages

Under the proposed legislation, to make a claim for pain and suffering (non-economic loss) an injury must now result in a permanent impairment of greater than 5%. This means that some injured young people will not have any claim for compensation - their medical expenses will be covered by Medicare and if they are too young to work they commonly won't have a claim for loss of wages.

Children and young people who are bullied at school, or suffer scarring as a result of a dog bite or are injured by a faulty or poorly designed toy may have no claim for compensation as they will not have a permanent injury greater than the 5% threshold.

In at least two states, Queensland and South Australia, where similar reforms have been introduced, the rights of children and young people to seek compensation have not been removed in such a draconian fashion.

The only appropriate protection for children and young people is that they are exempt from the application of the threshold.

For more information see the YouthLaw website:

<http://www.youthlaw.asn.au> ■

New YACVic Staff

There have been a few changes at YACVic lately. Two much loved staff members have left us for greener pastures – Executive Officer Janet Jukes and Communications Officer Alex Markham. We know we're not alone when we say they will be sorely missed. Stepping into their shoes are Georgie Ferrari (Executive Officer) and Nik Beuret (Communications Officer).



Georgie Ferrari

I am delighted to be taking up the role of Executive Officer at YACVic. I have over ten years experience in the NGO sector, working mainly in the areas of youth, housing and health. I have recently moved from New South Wales

where I was the Executive Officer for the NSW Association for Adolescent Health. I am a passionate advocate of youth issues and am looking forward to working with you on issues that affect young people and the youth sector in Victoria.



Nik Beuret

It's very exciting to be moving back into the youth sector as the Communications Officer for YACVic. I started out in the youth community cultural development sector in NSW 7 years ago, where I worked mainly in the areas of youth

access to the media. I'm looking forward to bringing my skills and passion back to where it all began for me.

Continued from front page



knowledge and skills of young people by providing extensive training in various facets of skateboard manufacture, the possibility of a sustainable business proposition began to take shape.

It was an idea supported enthusiastically by the Gippsland Area Consultative Committee, with subsequent funding from the Federal Government's Regional Assistance Program, the Foundation for Young Australians, the Percy Baxter Charitable Foundation and the Sidney Myer Foundation. A \$1,000 contribution came from the Bairnsdale Rotary Club for a glue spreading machine.

Originally auspiced by Lakes Entrance Community Health, the SK8 project began with 16 young people aged between 15 to 22 years. A business incubator at Forestech, a timber training campus managed by the East Gippsland Institute of TAFE, was offered as a gesture of the solid community partnership and became the home of what is now known as Cheffy Industries.

With the support of Glenn and LECH youth worker Andrea Farley, work began on constructing prototype decks and developing the logo artwork as well as the image of how the young people wanted Cheffy Industries to look.

'Because we were so focussed on the outcome of being a legitimate youth enterprise, there was a lot of ownership going on within the group,' Glenn said.

'Throughout the whole process, we encouraged the participants to be proactive. This meant a lot of design work, willingness to keep tweaking things until everyone was happy with both the business image and the product, and a really strong sense of being a team.

'Those that have hung-in over the past few years have fed back that the project has not only helped them gain a good qualification, but has also enhanced their self esteem and

ability to communicate in front of a range of groups.'

Glenn says there have been many highlights, including field trips and forums, establishing links with various trade and industry networks, and speaking at the *Parliamentary Inquiry into Rural Employment Issues* as well as being guest presenters at the fourth *Small Rural Community Health Conference* at Hepburn Springs in late 2002.

'We were fortunate enough to be able to conduct an industry tour of Tasmania, checking out veneer plants and value adding strategies being applied in that state's timber industry,' Glenn said.

The thrust of the project is to encourage young people to direct their own futures, fill a niche in the Australian skateboard market that could take them into a range of business enterprises, as well as ensure they gain a nationally accredited qualification in Timber Manufactured Products (Certificate 2).

The East Gippsland Institute of TAFE has now become the formal auspice of the project, with the Forestech facility and its excellent timber manufacturing facilities at the disposal of the SK8 trainees. The Foundation for Young Australians remains an active partner, as does Gippsland Timber Development Inc.

'We really want to see young people getting good certification and get the commercial arm of Cheffy Industries to generate traineeships and employment opportunities for the long haul,' Glenn said.

'We're continuing to work on new products and services (including skatewear) as well as a maintenance and repair service for skateboards, so it looks like some exciting times ahead.'

Invitations are now extended to young people to carve a career without the grind, tailslide into TAFE and become part of what promises to be a fantastic business enterprise for anyone between 17 to 28 years old who loves working at the cutting edge, combining timber manufacturing with the wonderful world of skating. For more information, contact Project Co-ordinator Glenn Bury on (03) 5155 6806 or by email at gbury@egtafe.vic.edu.au

This article has been contributed by the Gippsland East Local Learning & Employment Network. ■

Women in the Youth Sector Conference ... Maximising Our Capacity

Thursday 31 July & Friday 1 August 2003 (Melbourne)

The Women in Youth Sector Conference will provide participants with the opportunity to relax, laugh and be inspired in a stimulating and creative environment. The two-day conference will include a number of sessions that engage, educate and provide a voice and support for women seeking to be all that they can be (and more!) in their respective roles within the community.

Keynote speakers from a range of health and welfare organisations will be part of a panel that provides insight on how they have broken through the glass ceiling. Other sessions include overcoming professional hurdles, leadership skills audit, creating a career pathways plan and a professional mandala session. The final session, on the afternoon of 1 August, will be opened to the whole sector to create 'a plan of action for the youth sector'.

The WYS Conference is supported by the Office of Women's Policy, Office for Youth, YACVic and Southern Regional Youth Committee. The cost of this two-day conference is only \$50, to enable women working right across the youth sector to attend.

For further information and to request a registration form, please contact the organising committee via e-mail at wysconference@hotmail.com. ■

2003-2004 State and Commonwealth budgets: What's in there for young people?

Below is a summary of the key elements of the 2003-2004 State and Commonwealth budgets that particularly impact on young people.

State Budget

Employment and training

New initiatives

Some positive initiatives addressing youth employment have been introduced:

- \$10 million over four years for a new Jobs for Young People program. The program aims to create 1,100 new jobs and traineeships for young people aged 15-24 in local government authorities and will have a particular focus on rural and regional areas. The initiative will provide a wage incentive to encourage the creation of trainee and apprenticeship opportunities in local government areas
- \$2 million to extend the Youth Employment Link (YEL) website to include local employment information targeted to young people in rural and regional communities

These initiatives will assist in providing entry level opportunities in the public sector and will specifically assist people in rural and regional areas.

Completion bonus

The government has announced the removal of payroll tax exemption for wages paid to trainees and apprentices. The exemption will be replaced by a completion bonus to be paid to employers when a traineeship / apprenticeship is completed. Employers of three or more apprentices / trainees will receive a \$1,500 bonus when a trainee completes a course and a \$3,000 bonus when an apprentice completes an apprenticeship. This system will be effective from 1 July 2003. The removal of the tax exemption is expected to increase Government revenue by \$30 million in the first year and \$60 million for the following three years. \$51.4 million over four years has been allocated to pay for the completion bonus.

YACVic applauds the government for shifting the focus to completion as the current system of subsidisation did not necessarily promote successful outcomes as evidenced by poor completion rates. However, completion rates do not simply relate to employer misuse of the tax exemption. Workplace issues such as bullying, lack of mentoring and exploitation must also be addressed to increase completion rates.

YACVic is also concerned about the degree to which employers will be encouraged to create new opportunities for young apprentices and trainees if there are now no incentives provided. This may undermine the Government's commitment to increasing participation in training and may pose difficulties for other initiatives such as the Local Learning and Employment Networks which are trying to promote new opportunities in local areas. YACVic would like to see the government consider creative ways of opening up more opportunities for young trainees and apprentices with the extra revenue that will be generated by the removal of the payroll tax.

Community Jobs Program

The Community Jobs Program (CJP) has been allocated \$38.6 million over four years. This program provides employment and training opportunities for long term unemployed people and other disadvantaged job seekers with locally based community projects. However, program targets for 2003-4 have been reduced significantly indicating a cut to the program. The targets have been reduced from 2,300 (expected actual outcome of 1905) in 2002-3 to 875 in 2003-4.

Community Business Employment program

The Community Business Employment (CBE) program provides intensive employment assistance to jobseekers and is

targeted at young people, mature age and migrant jobseekers. In last year's budget, the program was to meet a target of 10,000. However, funding will now cease for this program as of August 2003. This breaks a pre-election promise in which the Bracks Government committed to 'continue the successful Community Business Employment program'.

Although new employment initiatives have been announced, YACVic is concerned that the new initiatives will not cater for the young people that may be disadvantaged by cuts to the CJP and CBE program.

Education

YACVic welcomes additional funds in education. Initiatives include:

- \$82 million over four years for 450 additional teachers in secondary schools
- \$49.5 million over four years for 256 primary school student welfare officers
- \$30.3 million for nine new schools
- \$89 million to upgrade facilities at 41 suburban schools
- \$33.7 million for a rebuilding of some secondary schools in country Victoria
- \$3.5 million over four years to boost vocational education and training (VET) in years 10, 11 and 12
- \$12 million to replace and upgrade TAFE equipment
- \$4.8 million over four years to continue the On Track program to assist students wanting education or work advice once they have left the school system

Fines and fees

The government has announced an annual indexation of all fees and fines set by regulation. In addition there will be a partial catch up increase for fees that have not been increased for some time. This will have significant implications for young people,

particularly disadvantaged young people, in their ability to pay fines and may ultimately lead to criminal charges for non-payment of accumulated fines. The increase may also impact on some young people's ability to pay for a licence, motor registration etc.

While fees and fines will increase annually, there has not been a similar indexation of concessions which may have helped to offset (at least to some extent) an increase in costs. For example, the Education Maintenance Allowance has not been increased in over a decade.

Public transport

YACVic welcomed a significant investment in public transport in last year's budget. However, this year there is a greater emphasis on roads. Of the \$171 million allocated to the Linking the Suburbs program, \$149.2 million is to be spent on roads, \$13.7 on new and improved public transport services and \$8 million on new cycling paths. Two key public transport initiatives include:

- \$6.3 million to upgrade the route 700 bus (Warrigal Road)
- \$7.4 million over four years to upgrade metropolitan bus service levels in some parts of outer suburban Melbourne

Youth homelessness

YACVic welcomes allocation of funding for specific initiatives to address the needs of young people who are homeless. \$8.8 million over four years has been allocated as part of the Youth Homelessness Action Plan. The initiatives include:

- Independent Living Skills Program (\$4.8 million over four years) — an independent living skills program for young people at risk of homelessness (especially young people leaving care) will be developed. The program aims to sustain private rental accommodation, reduce isolation and avoid poverty traps
- Assisting Family Reconciliation (\$2 million over four years) — extra funds will be provided to expand services for

families and young people to address homelessness. Specifically, the funds will assist family reconciliation by encouraging young people to return to the home or to establish positive links with close relatives and remain in education

- Employment and training for young people (\$2 million over four years) — additional resources will target employment and training programs to young people with high needs and a long-term history of difficulties in education, employment or accommodation. These employment and training programs will work in partnership with the Commonwealth Jobs Placement program to improve outcomes for young people

Child protection and placement services

The Government has allocated \$100,000 to provide mentors for 75 young people leaving care. The aim of the program is to increase the life skills, self-confidence and self esteem of the young person leaving care. \$100,000 cannot address the needs of all the young people leaving care and YACVic would like to see additional funds allocated in the next budget to ensure that this very vulnerable group is better supported.

Note:

The Children's Welfare Association of Victoria (CWAV) has undertaken a detailed analysis of how the service system can better respond to young people leaving care called Improving Outcomes for Young People Leaving Care in Victoria

Health

Two key mental-health initiatives are continued in this budget:

- \$7 million for stage two of Mental Health Services for Kids and Youth in Footscray
- Ongoing funding for four additional youth dual diagnosis positions to target young people with serious mental illness and co-existing substance use problems

Youth development program

As promised prior to the 2002 state election, an additional \$5 million has been allocated to Advance, an enhanced Victorian youth development program. Advance will be available to all government secondary schools over the next four years to promote youth leadership and volunteerism.

FReeZA Central

An additional \$2 million over four years will be used to establish FReeZA Central, an enhancement to the existing FReeZA program. The new money will be used to provide young people with opportunities to obtain practical music industry experience and music industry management training. This funding also fulfills an election promise.

Sport and recreation

\$10 million has been allocated over four years to increase the community's involvement in sport and recreation. The funding will be targeted at groups that show a decreasing level of involvement in sport and recreation and this will include young people.

Safety

\$23 million over two years has been allocated to introduce reduced speed limits outside every primary and secondary school across Victoria.

Region amalgamation

The Government has announced that the DHS Western and Northern regions will be amalgamated. The amalgamation is a savings initiative aimed at reducing corporate overheads in terms of management and administrative functions. It is unclear at the moment what this will mean in terms of service provision, development and support for young people in these areas. However, at this stage the Government has indicated that there is no proposed reduction to existing levels of client services.

What's missing?

Last year YACVic provided a budget submission to Treasury outlining some issues that should be addressed in this year's budget. The key initiatives that have not been funded this year include:

- Establishment of a Children and Young People's Commission
- Establishment of a Youth Policy Advisory Council
- An increase in the age jurisdiction of the Children's Court
- A reduction in the cost of the tertiary student concession card to bring it in line with the secondary student concession card

Commonwealth Budget

Tertiary Education

The Federal Government proposes to increase funding to universities by \$1.5 billion over three years as part of a broader reform package. While YACVic welcomes additional funding, we are concerned that the proposed reform package will increase students' financial burden and that some young people may be discouraged from undertaking a higher education course. In addition, much of the increased funding to universities is tied to controversial workplace relations reforms such as moving university staff to individual contracts and restricting industrial action.

There will be changes to the current Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), including an increase in the repayment threshold to \$30,000 from 2005 (the threshold is currently \$24,365). This is a welcome reform. However, the reforms also allow for fees in all courses, except nursing and teaching, to be partially deregulated. This provides for an increase of up to 30% on current VCEs rates.

Currently, universities can offer up to 25% of places to full fee paying students. The reforms allow for up to 50% of places to be offered to full fee paying students. Full fee paying students will be able to access a loans scheme, the Higher Education Loan Programme, if they are not able to pay fees up front. The loans will be repayable at a rate of 3.5% on top of CPI and the loans will be capped at \$50,000.

Changes to HECs and fees mean that students will be leaving university with greater debt

and YACVic believes that this may prove to be a disincentive for many students to take up a university place.

Other proposed changes include a five-year time limit on the amount of time a full time student can receive government funding for a course (i.e. students will have to complete degrees within five years) and the re-introduction of legislation to allow voluntary student unionism.

YACVic is concerned that proposed changes may impact on the ability of some young people to undertake tertiary education, particularly young people from low and middle-income families, young people from Indigenous backgrounds and young people from rural areas. In addition there is a concern that that proposed fee increases and introduction of loan schemes may result in significant debt for young people undertaking higher education which may be a disincentive for many young people to pursue further education.

Job Placement, Employment and Training Program (JPET) and Reconnect

Funding for both JPET and Reconnect has been increased for 2003-04 and Reconnect funding has been extended for a further four years. Funding for JPET has increased from \$18.5 million in 2002-03 to \$19.4 million in 2003-04. Funding for Reconnect increased from \$19.2 million in 2002-03 to \$20.2 million in 2003-04. The increase in funding is to allow for the indexation of both programs in 2003-04. However, from 2004-05 an efficiency dividend will be applied to both programs.

Social Security

Youth and Student Assistance – Restructured Reviews

The Federal Government plans to save \$47 million over four years by detecting 'breaches' or incorrect payments to people on Youth Allowance and Austudy. Under the measure, there will be:

- 5,000 new Austudy reviews of individual's entitlements per year
- 23,000 additional Youth Allowance (full-time student) reviews
- 17,000 additional Youth Allowance (jobseeker) reviews

Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)

Funding for the TILA has increased from \$897,000 in 2002-03 to \$2.6 million in 2003-04. TILA is one-off assistance up to the value of \$1,000. It is provided to, or on behalf of, young people leaving state-supported care, to assist them make the transition to independent living. It is delivered through state-supported non-government organisations as part of an overall transition plan for a young person exiting care.

Working Credit

This Working Credit scheme announced in the 2001-02 budget will be implemented in the coming financial year. The scheme allows for social security recipients to earn more money while receiving income support. Recipients will be able to build up the credits up to an amount of \$1,000 in earnings without losing income support.

Centrelink service delivery

The Government will provide funding to Centrelink of \$312 million over five years (including \$120.7 million capital) to ensure ongoing information technology reliability and allow Centrelink to deliver services online to customers (self service), enter working partnerships with community organisations and increase payment accuracy through automated data matching and information exchange with business, Government Departments, banks and others.

What's missing

- No increase to the level of Youth Allowance
- No discussion about employment creation

Great Victorian Bike Ride

Great Victorian Bike Riders Tobi and Sarah



By Simon Vincett

Sarah was ready for the challenge. An accomplished athlete who had been competing on the running track since five, no one doubted that she would take the 2002 Great Victorian Bike Ride in her stride. Her sister Tobi wasn't sure, but had faith in the support of their school group, with whom they would be riding.

It was the fitter of the two, Sarah, who got caught out in the rain. Going over Hall's Gap, rain soaked the riders and her cotton jumper wet was through. On the downhill the wind left her numb with cold.

'I had trouble holding on the brakes,' she recalls. Given some clothing by concerned riders, and with encouragement from teachers and friends, she got into camp cold but relieved.

Under the weather for the next few days, with support from her team she completed every day of the ride. There was a determination amongst the group not to get on the sag wagon, so they worked as a close-knit team.

Tobi, meanwhile, felt the uphill battle on day one. 'The first day was a real shock because I didn't realise how hard those hills really were,' she recalls. 'But we managed to get through that day and it was exciting to get there.' The second day was also a test but after that she was fine. Inspired by her experience, Tobi has since found a job in a

local bike shop, working there on weekends and after school. She's just bought her own mountain bike, and is now seeking out the hills for a challenge. 'I'm hoping to do cross-country,' she says. 'I've got to build up a few k's first, but I like the off-road.'

On their first Great Victorian Bike Ride Tobi and Sarah found friendships and fun and discovered an enduring love of cycling. They learnt that cyclists are there to help, with the shirt off their back if necessary. Both will be back for more, encouraging their friends just as they were encouraged.

Bicycle Victoria are looking for people to join them on this year's (29 November – 8 December) adventurous ride from the Summit of Mt Hotham down to the sea at Mornington – riding through the flat country of the Latrobe Valley, passed power stations and windfarms, over the Strzelecki ranges, through the majestic giant Mountain Ash stands and tree ferns in the rainforests of the Tarra Valley, along the rugged Bass Strait coastline, finishing by sailing across Western Port Bay and an adrenalin rush down Arthur's Seat.

For more information and the online entry form check out

<http://www.bv.com.au>,

or call Alan Tonkin

on (03) 8636 8833 or 1800 639 634

YACVic shares participation knowledge at LLENs Conference

In mid-May Jen Rose (YACVic Participation In Practice project Officer) and Michelle Blanchard (YACVic Youth Reference Group convenor) co-presented a paper on young people's participation at the LLENs Building Pathways to the Future, 2003 and Beyond conference. The Conference brought together Local Learning and Employment Network representatives from around the state to share ideas and listen to speakers or a range of topics. Young people's participation is of particular interest to LLENs wanting to better understand why young people may not engage with mainstream education and employment services.

Jen and Michelle drew from the knowledge YACVic had gained from the operation of the Youth Reference Group and the Participation in Practice project. They highlighted some key issues in supporting young people's participation in consultations, on boards and committees and in their local communities. The paper also provided some practical tools to encourage LLENs to take a partnership approach to young people's participation in their organisation, promoting participation that is inclusive, purposefully engaging and empowering for all involved.

Michelle and Jen highlighted the benefits of young people's direct participation for a LLEN and discussed some methods that can be used to avoid tokenism, provide support, improve accessibility for a diverse range of young people, provide feedback and effectively evaluate processes through which young people participate.

For more information about the Participation in Practice Project contact Jen Rose (YACVic PIP project officer) on 9612 8920 or email jrose@yacvic.org.au.

Volatile substances: new legislation

By Sarah Nicholson, YouthLaw

Legislation is currently before Victorian Parliament which, if passed, will not only give police the power to seize items used to inhale volatile substances (more commonly known as 'chroming') but will also give police unprecedented powers to search under 18 year olds for possession of these items without a warrant.

It will also enable police to apprehend and detain people under 18 year olds to protect them and others from the effects of inhaling volatile substances. This is unlike possession of alcohol where police do not have the power to search under 18 years olds they only have the power to seize the alcohol. The proposed legislation does not make it an offence to inhale or possess substances for inhalation.

Issues

This legislation will not solve the complex and long-standing problem of young people using volatile substances. Providing police with search and detention powers was not a recommendation of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's comprehensive and extensive Inquiry into the Inhalation of Volatile Substances. This legislation will create other problems for young people interacting with the police, potentially leading to violence and criminal charges. As a part of this legislation, police will have the power to transport young people and detain them at a police station in an interview room, without medical supervision.

A Parliamentary sub-committee, the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, has asked Parliament to consider if the provisions

'constitute an undue trespass to rights and freedoms' as there is no criminal liability or penalty sanctions involved'.

Their recommendation can be found at:

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/sarc/2003alerts/03alt3.htm> under the title *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances (Volatile Substances) Bill*. Youth Law's submission to that committee can be found here: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/sarc/Billsindex03.htm>

This legislation will come into force after twelve months if it is passed, during which time operational protocols between police, services and other stakeholders, will be developed. Many agencies already have or are developing protocols with local police, that includes liaison with traders and concerned residents, so as to see that a welfare response, and not a policing response is followed. These protocols will become even more important if the Bill is passed. The Bill includes a 'sunset' provision, which will mean that it will lapse after two years if it is not renewed. ■

Joint Youth Homelessness project update

As reported in our previous issue, YACVic, the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria and Council to Homeless Persons, have established a twelve month position to address the complex issues of youth homelessness.

Express Yourself! Young writers' group

Got an urge to write? A series of free writing workshops for young people who have experienced homelessness will be run over the coming months. There will be freedom to explore creative and non-fiction writing on a broad range of topics. Anyone can take part regardless of writing experience, and participants can have their work published on the internet.

The goals are to have some fun with writing, to explore what it can be for you – a creative outlet, a means of self-expression, a way to communicate ideas or get something off your chest – and to bring young people's voices out into the wider world.

Participants will not be quizzed about their experiences of homelessness. Whether you've couch-surfed, slept rough, stayed in a refuge or transitional housing, or ever had to sleep in a bed that's not your own – this writers' group is for you.

Workshops will be run by Meg Mundell, Youth Policy Officer at Council to Homeless Persons, who has worked as a journalist and editor.

To find out more, or to join up, e-mail meg@bigissue.org.au or call 9419 8699. Those who are unable to attend workshops but would like to see their writing published on the internet can send contributions to Meg via email: meg@chp.org.au.

IT partnership project

Council to Homeless Persons and the YACVic are currently laying the groundwork for an IT partnership project focusing on youth homelessness that will centre on a web page dedicated to exploring the issue, providing information and contacts in the area and extending the discussion about youth homelessness beyond the homelessness sector. Agencies or individuals interested in contributing content to the page should email Nik Beuret at YACVic: nbeuret@yacvic.org.au. ■

Put young people on the Agenda

Gain invaluable access to a

state-wide network of young

people, organisations and

individuals who work with

young people... join YACVIC!

WHAT TYPE OF MEMBER AM I?

► Organisational Members

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

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.

► Analyse and develop policy through

consultation with our members.

► Provide our members with

information through our regular printed newsletter YIKES! our email announcement list and our website.

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.

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

► Associate 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

► Additional members

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

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

*YACVIC'S purpose and objectives are listed on our website or may be obtained by calling us on (03) 9612 8999 Any personal information collected by YACVIC is subject to our privacy policy and treated as strictly confidential

10 things you (potentially) didn't know you didn't know about depression

by Anna Wood & Michelle, YACVic Youth Reference Group

Fact one

Depression is an illness. Like other medical problems it can, and should, be treated as such.

Fact two

Depression is different from the normal 'down' feelings we have every now and then. Everybody goes through tough times. Someone might have depression when they have felt sad, down or miserable for more than two weeks, have lost interest in the things they would normally enjoy doing and experience a range of other symptoms including becoming withdrawn from family and friends, relying on alcohol or sedatives, stopped going out or doing things they enjoy, feel overwhelmed, guilty, unhappy, indecisive, irritable, disappointed or frustrated. They may also feel tired, sick and run down, have trouble sleeping or notice a change in their eating habits. Sometimes a person experiencing depression may have thoughts that they 'are a failure' or that 'life isn't worth living.'

Fact three

Depression affects over 800,000 adult Australians every year (i.e. one in five adults) and 95,000 children and young people. This means that people experiencing depression are not alone! There are thousands of other people going through the same thing.

Fact four

More women than men report depression at some time during their lives. One in four women experience depression, as do one in six men.

Fact Five

Of the 20% of young people experiencing symptoms of depression, one in ten need professional help.

Fact Six

Depression is treatable! If you think you may be depressed, you can talk to your General Practitioner. You could also speak to a school counsellor, youth worker, social worker or psychologist.

Fact seven

If you're worried about a friend who is depressed you can help by listening and showing them that you are concerned about them. You can encourage them to talk to somebody they trust like a youth worker or counsellor about how they are feeling. If you feel able to, you could offer to go with them to talk to somebody.

Useful tips for helping someone who might be depressed include:

- indicate that you have noticed a change in their behaviour
- suggest that they visit their family doctor
- suggest that they seek help from a professional person
- assist the person to make an appointment to see a professional
- accompany the person when they go to see a health professional
- make extra efforts to stay in contact
- include the person in social and pleasant events
- help them to find out information about depression
- try and have other close friends and family adopt a similar inclusive approach

Fact eight

It's not a good idea to tell somebody to 'snap out of it' or 'get over it.' Depression won't just go away - it needs to be treated. Similarly, using excessive drugs and alcohol as a way of dealing with depression will not work.

Fact nine

There is Internet counselling available for people up to the age of 18 on the kids helpline website (<http://www.kidshelpline.com.au>), so if you are too shy to ring them you can try that!

Fact ten

There is help everywhere. If you don't feel you can speak to friends and family there is your local doctor, if you don't feel you can speak to them there are people at school, if not them, you can pick up the phone. ■

If you need immediate telephone counselling you can contact Lifeline on 131 114 (1300 131 144 if you live in a rural area) or if you are under 18, Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800.

The information in this article is based on information from the following websites and organisations...you might like to check them out

Beyond Blue <http://www.beyondblue.org.au>

Reach Out! <http://www.reachout.com.au>

YBBlue <http://www.ybblue.com.au>

Kids Help Line <http://www.kidshelpline.com.au>