

Space Invaders? Young people and public space

vent someone from participating in anti-social acts or entering a particular area.

Giving police powers to direct someone to 'move on' was an 'option' also put forward in February this year in a discussion paper released by the Inner City Entertainment Precincts Taskforce called *A Good night for all: Options for improving safety and amenity in inner city entertainment precincts.*

So what constitutes 'anti-social behaviour' and who decides? Like the Liberal Party, the Inner City Entertainment Precincts Taskforce is very much concerned with reducing anti-social behaviour. The Taskforce discussion paper states that:

The key behaviour not currently sanctioned by legislation that has been most commonly cited by key stakeholders involves groups of young people congregating in public places. Stakeholders suggest, and qualitative data demonstrates, that the presence of young people in these areas has a significant impact on community perceptions of safety.¹

Research on ASBOs and powers similar to 'move on' powers elsewhere finds that these powers are utilised in a way that discriminates against marginalised groups, and that young people are the targets of such powers at disproportionate levels.

The NSW Ombudsman reviewed the powers granted to police in the NSW Summary Offences Act 1988, to give direction to a person or persons to move on. The review found the powers were overwhelmingly utilised to direct young people and Indigenous people to move on. The report of the review stated that almost half (48%) the people issued with directions to 'move on' were under the age of 17.² It also noted that a high proportion (22%) of people given directions to 'move on' were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people given directions, over half (51%) were under the age of 17.³

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'Anti-social behaviour', 'move on powers' and 'youth curfews' are terms that have been heard lately in public statements, policy proposals and political media releases of late. What do they mean, and how might they impact on young people?

The importance of equitable access to public space for young people is of particular concern to the Public Space Action Group, an advocacy network established this year currently including representatives from the Equal Opportunity Commission, Youthlaw, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues and the Western Young People's Independent Network. YACVic and the Public Space Action Group, are hosting the **"Space Invaders? Young people and public space"** forum in June. To find out more about the forum turn to page 10 to check out the flyer.

Issues relating to discrimination and young people's relationships to public space in general have been discussed and documented broadly for quite some time, however in recent months particular language is starting to surface in debates and policy proposals relating to young people and public space. YACVic is very concerned that in Victoria we are starting to hear the terms 'criminalising anti-social behaviour', 'youth curfews', and 'move on powers.'

A media release in late April from the Liberal Party of Victoria outlined their new policy to 'prevent anti-social behaviour' including the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), 'Move on laws' and a midnight curfew for children under 15 engaging in anti-social behaviour. The Liberal Party explains that the ASBO plan would be based on the UK model and is a civil order that would carry a criminal penalty if it were breached. It would pre-

also in this issue...

This June edition of Yikes! is a bumper packed issue of info of what's been going on and what's coming up. Young people are still on the public agenda in terms of **Public Space**, with two forums coming up *Space Invaders? Young people and public space* and *People, Profit & Public Places*, Jen Rose our Policy Officer has put together some background on why. Vera Smiljanic looks at the **Federal Government's proposed IR changes** and how they're going to detrimentally affect young people. We also have a report from Shepparton on the **rural perspectives of both young people and youth workers**. YACVic takes a look at the **State Budget** and some of the highlights for young people and we also look at the **Senate Inquiry into Mental health** but this time with the assistance of our YRG. And there's still more inside so go find yourself a good coffee, put your feet up and read on...

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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.

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.

YIKES!

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to Yikes! are welcome. The deadline for the next edition of Yikes! is 18 July.

INSERTS & ADVERTISING

If you wish to include an insert or advert in Yikes! please contact the YACVic Communications Officer on (03) 9612 8917 or email info@yacvic.org.au.

Editorial

You can tell we're less than 18 months out from an election when law and order debates begin to raise their ugly heads again can't you? In the last couple of months young people have been the targets of several discussions around "safety" and public space issues.

The first came with the Inner City Entertainment Precinct Taskforce's (ICEPT) discussion paper, *A good night out for all*. There were a couple of alarming "options" floated in this paper regarding young people, one, that "alternative meeting places for young people" be explored within the inner city entertainment precinct, a seemingly innocuous suggestion on the face of it, however, who decides what those meeting places are and who should be directed to them? and two, more concerning in it's suggestion that police be given the power to 'move on' young people if they are, or appear to be going to display anti social behaviour.

Following quickly on the heels of the ICEPT paper was Robert Doyle's policy platform advocating young people be moved on or taken home if out after a

certain time of night. (See front page article for more details)

YACVic voiced strong opposition to both the ICEPT discussion paper and Mr Robert Doyle's policy ideas. In mainstream print media, on radio and television we advocated for Victorian communities to stop problematising young people's behaviour and start understanding young people's rights to meet, recreate and just plain old hang out in public space!

In June of this year YACVic and the Public Space Action Group are convening an important halfday forum on young people and public space. "Space Invaders" will seek to bring together young people and members of the youth and community sector to identify particular issues of concern regarding young people and public space. It is hoped that it may provide some blocks to begin to pave the way towards community responses to address those issues.

Georgie Ferrari
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Space Invaders? Young people and public space

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The UK Antisocial Behaviour Act (2003) which the Liberal Party base their proposed model on, was reviewed this year by the Youth Justice Board, who reported that young people (under the age of 18) represented around 54% of those being issued with an Anti-Social Behaviour Orders being imposed. Furthermore, 15.5% of these resulted in that young person being placed in custody.⁴

It is of great concern to YACVic that move on powers would essentially criminalise activities that may not be conducted in order to deliberately cause injury or offence and that the introduction of such police powers would simply increase interactions between vulnerable groups, including young people (and particularly young people who are experiencing homelessness, Indigenous young people and young people from

culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) and the legal system.

1. Inner City Entertainment Precincts Taskforce. (2005) *A good night for all: Options for improving safety and amenity in inner city entertainment precincts*. Crime Prevention Victoria, Melbourne p.28.

2. NSW Ombudsman. *Policing public safety: Report under s.6 of the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Police and Public Safety) Act. 1998*. Sydney, 1999. p.229.

3. P 230.

4. Brogan, D. (2005) *Anti-Social Behaviour Orders: An assessment of current management information systems and the scale of Anti-Social Behaviour Order breaches resulting in custody*. UK Youth Justice Board. P.19.

For more information or questions please contact Jen Rose, YACVic's Policy Officer on 9620 4820 or jrose@yacvic.org.au

Young people to suffer under the Federal Government's proposed Industrial Relations changes

By Vera Smiljanic, Research Worker, Job Watch

The Federal Government has announced major changes to industrial relations laws. These changes are going to impact on all workers; however, young workers in particular are going to be adversely affected. Approximately 1.7 million young people aged 15-24 years (62 percent of the age group) were in employment in Australia in 2003-2004.

The wide ranging changes announced by the Government, likely to come into effect from January 2006, include:

- exempting businesses with up to 100 employees from unfair dismissal laws.
- increasing the probationary period from three to six months for new employees of companies with more than 100 employees.
- the replacement of the no disadvantage test, which individual agreements (AWAs) and certified agreements have to meet, with a lesser standard, the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard.
- setting up a new body, the Fair Pay Commission, to determine minimum wages.

Unfair Dismissal

Employees of businesses of up to 100 employees will be excluded from using unfair dismissal laws. Unfair dismissal laws protect workers against being harshly, unjustly and unreasonably dismissed.

The exclusion means that young workers, who are unfairly dismissed, as in the case studies below, will have no redress. In other words these employees will no longer be able to make a claim for unfair dismissal against their employer at the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

Ben, 17 - had been working as a casual on a regular basis at a hardware store for 18 months. When he turned 17 his boss continued to pay Ben at the 16 year old pay rate. When Ben raised the issue about being paid as a 17 year old he was left off the roster.

Sam, 20 - was employed full-time as a shop assistant for a bakery. He had worked 9 nights in a row. Sam's employer asked him if he could work the next night. Sam refused and was sacked.

John, 24 - was a tyre fitter. He arrived at work as normal and was assaulted by his supervisor with a knife. John did nothing to provoke the attack. The boss the next day called John in and sacked him. When John asked his boss for a reason he was given none.

The exclusion will result in young people being more reluctant to complain about unfair work conditions such as bullying, underpayment of wages, occupational health and safety issues. A young person is not likely to complain if they can be sacked at the whim of their employer and they have no recourse if they are sacked.

The exclusion also fails to recognise the devastation experienced by workers on a personal and financial level as a result of being sacked. This devastation will be further exacerbated if they have no avenue to seek redress. The Federal

Government's justification for excluding employees from accessing unfair dismissal is that it will create more jobs. However there is little research to back up the Government's claims.

Minimum Rates of Pay

A new body, the Fair Pay Commission, will be established to set minimum rates of pay. This body is likely to have a heavy economic focus. Currently the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) determines minimum award pay rates. It considers a number of criteria in determining minimum award pay rates including the needs of the low paid and the impact of the decision on the economy.

The Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Kevin Andrews, justification for setting up a new body was that the award pay rate rises set by the AIRC had been excessive and had priced the unemployed out of the job market. The unemployment rate in Australia in April this year was 5.1 percent, which is near a 30 year low. The Minister would not give any guarantee that the minimum wage rates would not be lowered and therefore could not confirm that workers would not be financially worse off under the new system.

Around 20 percent of Australia's workforce are covered by awards and therefore rely on the minimum pay rates set by the AIRC to receive an annual increase in their wages. This group of workers are likely to be women, young people, casuals, part-timers and in low skilled occupations.

Replacement of no disadvantage test

Currently individual and certified agreements are required to meet a no disadvantage test based on conditions contained in the designated award. These conditions include casual loading, overtime pay rates, higher rates of pay for shift and weekend work.

The replacement of the no disadvantage test means that all new agreements only have to meet the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions standard, which includes minimum wages, and the legislated conditions of annual leave, personal leave, parental leave and maximum number of ordinary hours. It also means that young workers will have to negotiate with their employer to receive conditions above that such as casual loading, overtime pay rates. These are conditions young people rely on to make ends meet.

Job Watch believes that any industrial relations system should balance the needs and rights of employers with the rights and needs of workers. The Federal Government's IR changes will create a system heavily skewed towards employers. Workers, in particular those who are most vulnerable in the labour market such as young people, will suffer detriment as a result of the erosion of many of their rights and conditions.

For anyone experiencing employment problems contact Job Watch's telephone advice service on 9662 1933 or 1800 331 617 (regional). Information sheets are available from Job Watch's website: www.job-watch.org.au

Perspectives of Young People Living in Shepparton

Young people, particularly those living in rural and regional areas, have seldom had opportunities to talk about their own perspectives, understandings and experiences of their own lives. This research sought to provide a group of young people from Shepparton with an anonymous voice about their lives, experiences, frustrations and issues. The aim of the project was to identify the issues, concerns and experiences of participants, from their own perspectives, from which youth and other initiatives can be tailored.

A diverse group of young people aged 14–24, (51 female and 41 male) participated in the research. A random selection of 56 students from three secondary schools in Shepparton, 36 young people from four mainstream youth services and the Rumbalara Football Netball Club completed both a 3-page questionnaire and a semi-structured interview.

Emerging themes

- Popular stereotypes and assumptions of young people were challenged in many ways. Many participants had taken on huge responsibilities and reported that they were "busy" and wanted more time to relax; they talked of the importance of their family and community in their lives; there was a young mother who stated that getting pregnant was "*the best thing that could have happened to me*"; most Kooris were in school; and a young man reported that being gay in Shepparton was no more difficult than being gay in Melbourne.
- When speaking about living in Shepparton these young people painted a varied picture. Some described Shepparton as "*friendly*", others talked positively about the "*space*", "*I like that it's not Melbourne, it's not too crowded*". Many also spoke of being "*bored*" and that there is "*nothing to do around here*" and some disliked Shepparton "*there's nothing here, there's nothing to keep people here, jobs*".
- The study explored with young people their social, emotional, and own perceptions of their 'well-being'. Most (71%) young people rated themselves above average or high and a further 23% rated themselves as average. When asked about the meaning of the term well-being, these young people indicated that relationships, emotional/psychological and personal dimensions were central features. When asked to identify the major concerns in their lives, 48 indicated that their greatest concern was in relation to achieving or working towards a goal. The maintenance of key relationships, most often with friends and family members, was also important to about a third of these young people. All the Koori respondents spoke about grief and dealing with death.
- The term 'reconciliation' was not familiar to some of these young people. Some, however, talked about an apology, ranging from those who were "100% for it" to those who were strongly against it because they felt that past injustices were not the responsibility of current governments. Overall, of the 83 who discussed reconciliation, 5 had no opinion, 28 were opposed, 23 had mixed sentiments, and 27 were generally supportive of attempts to seek reconciliation between

Australia's Indigenous and mainstream populations. That 'white Australians took the land' and that treatment of Indigenous populations had been 'unfair' was a sentiment expressed infrequently by these young people.

These findings suggest that while young people differ in their daily lives, they also share many experiences in common. The most striking of these is that most have goals they are focused on, many juggle multiple responsibilities and roles and they believe they must develop their own path for their future. They face issues and challenges in their lives in different ways, employ a variety of strategies to cope with these situations and conceive of their communities and their places in the world from distinctly individual positions. The lessons of this research are that in order to support young people in negotiating these experiences, we must know them and we must seek better understandings of their social worlds without judgment. Nine recommendations have been identified from this research.

Recommendations

- 1 Many young people are busy and want time and space to relax. Providing environments for young people to relax, and escape the 'pressure' is important. Young people should be encouraged to pursue relaxing activities and should not be denigrated for 'hanging out'.
- 2 Young people are diverse, have differing goals and are generally aware of their choices. They should be supported in pursuing the diverse array of choices that they make.
- 3 Stereotypes of young people being lazy and irresponsible are not supported by this study and should be challenged. In particular, young mothers viewed their parental status very positively and should be supported respectfully in raising their children.
- 4 To improve young people's well-being, positive relationships with young people and supportive environments and opportunities should be promoted. In particular, all community members should be encouraged to 'get to know' young people, take an interest in their lives and provide a confidential 'ear' when appropriate.
- 5 Older teenagers are looking for leisure activities and more enjoyable activities to escape from responsibility and 'pressure'. Such activities should be promoted, facilities provided and their leisure time supported.
- 6 Local services working with young people are providing support for young people with fewer supportive people in their lives and more structural barriers. Their work should be continued and supported. The social supports they provide for isolated young people are important to these young people and should be valued.
- 7 Encouraging community participation among young people needs to consider young people's perspectives of community and acknowledge the significant contributions that they already make in their own networks.

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Travelling all over the countryside!

The Perspectives of Youth Workers in Rural Victoria

While an increasing amount of research involves young people, much less involves those who work with young people, particularly in non-metropolitan areas.

In 2004, a study of rural youth workers was undertaken by interviewing 107 youth workers in non-metropolitan Victoria. Websites were used to identify Victorian youth agencies and other organisations employing youth workers that were located outside of Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat. After gaining permission from the CEO or equivalent, one worker from each agency, who worked half-time or more, was randomly selected and asked to participate. Workers were asked about their work, the type of programs they provide, philosophies of their work, career goals, job satisfaction and challenges in their work.

Of the 107 youth workers interviewed, 98 had undertaken post-secondary school study, including 13 who had completed a TAFE course, 26 who held a diploma and 58 who had a university degree. While a few had held their current position for many years, most had been in their current job for less than four years. Some had worked in rural practice for many years while the majority had worked rurally for two or three years.

Youth workers were asked their main roles and most indicated more than one role, with 48 reporting that counselling was among their primary duties, 40 indicating that their job entailed providing specific youth programs, and 31 said that they were involved in the provision of high-risk youth support. Others common roles included general support, health and wellbeing, community liaison and school programs.

When asked about their own key philosophies in their work, empowerment and encouragement were the most common responses. Community work, belief in change and support were also mentioned relatively often. Strengths-based approaches were common, with one respondent stating that it is "important that kids have ownership of what they are doing and take responsibility for their behaviour. Important to focus on strengths the person has and to communicate honestly". Many struggled to identify their employing organisation's main philosophy, with some suggesting that providing a relevant, psychoso-

cial, encouraging and/or holistic model of service was their employer's goal.

Around four in five were satisfied or very satisfied with their job and the same proportion indicated that they were supported most or all of the time. The key challenges, mentioned by two-thirds of respondents, were associated with lack of resources. Other challenges included too many demands on time, issues with management or the employing organisation and rurality. Most were working more hours than they were paid for, travelling large distances and lacking resources to transport young people, have basic equipment or employ more staff. The demands of their job were great while the resources to support them were lacking.

Recommendations from the study included the need for further support of rural youth workers, including financial support, respect from other service providers, increased support from employers, and acknowledgement of the demands, varied roles and expectations placed on these individuals. It was also recommended that collegial support and networks be promoted, rural barriers be addressed, and client feedback be expanded. Most importantly, the study highlighted that rural youth workers need to be recognised and commended for their commitment to and passion for both their work and young people.

For more information or a copy of the report, contact Lisa Bourke at the School of Rural Health, University of Melbourne (Shepparton) on bourke@unimelb.edu.au or on (03) 5823 4519.

Lisa Bourke is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Rural Health, University of Melbourne. Paula Geldens is a Lecturer at Monash University and researcher in the School of Rural Health, University of Melbourne. Susan Eastman is a researcher in the School of Rural Health, University of Melbourne. This study was funded by the Australian Research Council as part of a larger study on young rural residents and wellbeing.

Perspectives of Young People Living in Shepparton

FROM PAGE 4...

8 Cross-cultural relations in schools and youth agencies need to be improved. Support of Koori young people and the promotion of respectful attitudes toward all people should be emphasised in the schools and services.

9 Young people have concerns that are specific and warrant attention. It is recommended that support focus on their specific issues.

Research by Lisa Bourke, Paula Geldens and Susan Eastman—see article above

...so long as your not a P-plater

A letter to The Age

Seeing P-red!

A recent Victorian Coroner report calling the State Government to limit P-plater passenger numbers inflicts yet another penalty upon the majority of responsible probationary drivers! These impractical restrictions limit the mobility of young people, particularly with a scarcity of public transport in Melbourne's fringe. It further stifles environmental government efforts to foster car pooling incentives to improve air quality. Whilst the deaths of young people on Victorian roads are regrettable, government should seek other avenues to prevent the loss of Victorian lives.

Andrew Higgs, Member, YACVic Youth Reference Group

Mental Health Inquiry

By Rys Farthing, Information and Participation Officer, YACVic

On 8 March 2005, following the furore surrounding the wrongful detention of Cornelia Rau, the Australian citizen suffering mental illness who was detained in an immigration detention centre, the Australian Senate formed a select committee to inquire into and report on the provision of mental health services in Australia. The inquiry gained bipartisan support and was established to investigate the provision of mental health services more broadly across the Australian population. As mental health issues represent the majority of young people's health burden and mental illness is more common in young people than any other age group, young people suffer disproportionately from the under-funding and under-performance of the mental health system. With the burden of mental health issues falling heavily on young people, YACVic, and our Youth Reference Group jumped at the opportunity to prepare a submission for the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health's inquiry.

YACVic's submission focused on the need for youth appropriate mental health services to be developed and made available to all young people in Australia, and was developed in close consultation with our Policy Advisory Group. Essentially the focus was chosen because young people with mental illness "do better" in mental health services tailored to the needs of young people. Unfortunately however, in Victoria mental health services for young people are rare and difficult to access.

Adolescence is not only the peak period for the onset of psychiatric illness; it is also a complex and often precarious phase in the life cycle for psychosocial development. Most young people within the public mental health system in Victoria are either treated by child services or by overstretched adult services predominantly focussed on the chronically unwell with entrenched disability. These existing child (CAMHS) and adult (AMHS) services face their own particular challenges that mean they are often inappropriate environments for older adolescents and young adults with emerging (and treatable) mental illnesses.



Despite this need for youth appropriate services, clinical and public health responses have been few, piecemeal and relatively ineffective to date. In Victoria the Public Mental Health service structure dictates that a person turning 18, can utilise the services of an adult service only if they have a defined 'serious mental illness' (meaning in most cases 'psychosis', especially schizophrenia). Therefore a myriad of other mental health problems of young people in the 18-25 age group largely go either undetected or receive no intervention whatsoever. This poses a serious challenge to health services especially in countries like Australia undergoing rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and socio-cultural change, where disturbance rates are highest.

Young people are often reluctant to seek help and are very discerning about when, where and from whom they seek assistance. There is a critical need for youth oriented services. Young people who don't necessarily have a 'serious mental illness', and even those who do, must also deal with the stigma associated with attending a mental health clinic. The need is twofold; to provide mental health services with a 'youth' focus, and

resource the primary care sector to better detect and manage the more high prevalence mental health problems.

YACVic's Youth Reference Group (YRG) took a different approach in highlighting this need for youth specific services for young people. Using their own words and stories, the YRG's Mental Health Working Group created a submission that highlighted the dramatic impacts of the failings of the mental health system. They highlighted the consequences for young people 'lost' in between the child and adult mental health services, and the dramatic impacts that social stigma surrounding many illnesses can have on young people, their peers, family and ability to function within society.

The YRG also highlighted many existing opportunities to improve the provision of mental health services for young people such as expanding the funding for services like kids help like, or funding existing SMS referral services.

For more information on the Inquiry go to www.aph.gov.au and you can also download YACVic's submission at www.yacvic.org.au

The State Budget:

What does it mean for young people?

The 2005–06 State Budget placed a very welcomed focus on investing in social infrastructure. This reflects the Government's agenda to commit funds that will go some way towards addressing disadvantage in Victoria as outlined in the Government's policy statement *A Fairer Victoria*. It could have gone further however, to invest in young people. Here is a brief breakdown of some budget highlights relating to young people.

The Budget provides for fairly substantial funding for initiatives relating to children and families, but young people get a little short changed. Whilst initiatives for 'keeping young people on track' and education received focus in the budget, very little money was allocated to supporting young people outside of these areas. In relation to addressing disadvantage in Victoria, the budget provided very little focus on young people in areas such as mental health, homelessness and support for young people in or leaving State care.

Children and families

The budget reports an allocation of an extra \$265 million in caring for children. Some high profile examples include:

- The upgrade of the Royal Children's Hospital
- \$102 million over four years towards the *Putting Children First initiative*, focussed on funding day care, increasing kindergarten subsidies, early intervention childhood services, family support innovation projects and initiatives to improve the health of Indigenous children
- \$21 million over four years and \$1.3 million total estimate investment (TEI) to establish the *Putting Children First - promoting Child Safe Workplaces initiative**

Specific funding for Young People

In terms of funding for young people, the focus was on 'getting young people back on track' with funding including:

- \$1.1 million over two years for the

implementation of a program designed to reduce offending and violence by young people not in custody aged 12 - 15 who are excluded from, or not attending school

- \$1.9 million over two years to expand the availability of the *It's Not OK To Be Away* kit to schools across the State and provide additional support to schools in the development of truancy reduction strategies
- \$15 million total estimated investment (TEI) to refurbish and replace existing residential facilities that provide residential services for children removed from their families or primary carers
- \$25 million over four years to implement the Government's commitment to increase the age of jurisdiction of the Criminal Division of the Children's Court from 17 to 18 years. This initiative includes diversionary, rehabilitative and support services to accommodate the increased demand on the juvenile justice system.

Educational

Education and training more broadly also come under the spotlight in this budget. Amongst the focus for spending was:

- an investment in facilities for excellence to address demand for diversity and specialisation in secondary schools and specific allocation of funding towards the Schools for Innovation and Excellence program
- \$29 million over four years to continue the Local Learning and Employment Networks and other programs focussed on the education, training and employment needs of young people
- spending on pre-apprenticeship programs at a regional level
- funding to expand lab.3000, a digital design program.

Public transport

Money allocated to improving public transport will be of benefit to young people, and YACVic is pleased to see a

focus on outer suburban areas in some of that funding allocation. However much more spending will need to be allocated in the future to address the public transport needs of young people. In addition, while it is possible that spending on disability services may impact on young people with a disability, no funding is earmarked specifically for young people.

Mental health

Whilst the budget contained a welcomed focus on early intervention and relapse prevention in mental health, it was disappointing not to see a focus on providing youth specific mental health services. This is especially the case given that mental health issues represent the majority of young people's health burden and mental illness is more common in young people than in any other age group.

Homelessness

The Council to Homeless Persons also recorded disappointment in a lack of additional funding for the homelessness sector. The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare expressed concern that young people in foster and residential care and those leaving State care also didn't receive any attention in the budget.

This budget does provide funding for some initiatives that will help address disadvantage in Victoria, however many young people of high need have missed out. To ensure A Fairer Victoria, YACVic urges the Government to consider future spending to reduce the marginalisation of those young people most in need in the State.

* This seems to be the Working with Children Check. Interestingly, the budget does state that applications from volunteers will be fully funded by the Government.

Budget comment by Jen Rose, YACVic Policy Officer, 9620 4820 or jrose@yacvic.org.au

Drugs: A Change Of Perception by Tom Griffin

'Even for a single trial this drug (ecstasy) leads to a much more positive perception of it'

Towards the end of April the federal government launched their \$12 million anti-drug advertisement campaign. The campaign targets the three most popular recreational drugs in our community: marijuana, ecstasy and speed. In this current set of advertisements, one of the government's main aims is clear: to change the perceptions surrounding drug use.

On April 17th, Health Parliamentary secretary Christopher Pyne stated 'Some people will think the government has gone too far, but the truth is you can't be too graphic when describing the health impacts of illicit drugs'. These graphic images include: cracked teeth, panic attacks, violence and hospitalisation. While such graphic images work for drink driving and smoking advertisements, it is still unclear whether such methods work in anti-drug campaigns. While almost all people understand the horrific impacts that can be associated with drink driving or smoking, the effects of drug use are not nearly as prevalent, research showing that many young Australian's hold alternative views concerning drug use.

In a report entitled 'Formative research with young Australians to assist in the development of the National Illicit Drugs Campaign', six main attitudinal groups were surveyed, ranging from those who reject drugs entirely, through neutral groups and occasional users to addicts. Within these groups it was found that for the target drugs; marijuana, ecstasy and speed, those who had used them even once found the experience to be positive, with ecstasy rated as very positive. More than half the people interviewed had tried marijuana with even those falling

under the category of 'strong rejecters' admitting if they were offered the drug they

would be tempted². Of the three target drugs, speed differed markedly, its continued use being associated with the more 'junky' side of drug use. With both the experience and the perceptions of drug use found to be vastly more positive than negative, the government has come out in attack attempting to change these ideas, launching five different television ads.

The Ads

The 'Lost Dreams' advertisement is clearly aimed at the heartstrings of parents, presenting images of a girl selling her body, a thief trying to find money, a mother and daughter fighting and a boy being put into a body bag. On top of these images, the voice of fate explains how drugs can ruin your dreams. These ads promote the stereotypical idea that any illicit drug use will ruin your life. Such ideas and the images used are out of date and are obviously aimed at parents who know little to nothing about drugs. This advertisement will simply muddle parents understanding of drugs and will most likely do more harm than good. To simply discourage the use of marijuana, ecstasy and speed the images are far too extreme.

In the 'Ad within an Ad' we are taken to various households who have just watched the governments advertisement, and are shown ways to communicate with children about drug use. It is very easy to criticise this advertisement; the 'too good to be true' families on display spoon feeding us awkward dialogue the government hopes will reverberate within family households across the country. Despite obvious shortcomings, the advertisement may at least plant the seed of possible discussion in parents mind and give them an idea of how to do it. I don't believe it will stop drug use in anyway whatsoever, but it does fulfill the government's aim.

Marijuana, ecstasy and speed

Aside from the two general ads, the government released three ads addressing specific drugs, marijuana, ecstasy and speed. The marijuana advertisement is without doubt the worst of the three mainly due to its dull imagery. The only particular images of interest are the person in

hospital segment which is far too extreme and the car accident scene, which for some reason misses the mark. Given that a great number of people in the community have tried marijuana it's hard to tell who this ad is aimed at. The majority of the images obviously reflect frequent usage of the drug, which will not resonate with those who use it occasionally, and will have no impact on those who use it daily. For those who have not tried marijuana, I doubt their perceptions will be changed by this advertisement simply because there is a wider acceptance in the community that marijuana is safe when used in moderation.

The ecstasy advertisement is extreme and should impact on both those without experience of the drug and trialists. The scene at the dentist portraying damaged teeth is probably the most effective of the campaign. Saying this, the ad will most likely not deter people already using the drug recreationally. The depression scene fails to impact while the dialogue in the club scene is atrocious, the name ecstasy is rarely bandied about as the ad presents. The images are of course shocking, the hospital scene invoking one of the more prevalent negative perceptions concerned with ecstasy, that you can actually die from its use. Again this may raise fear amongst the inexperienced, however, this would most likely be dismissed as shock tactics by experienced users, as cases of death or hospitalisation are relatively rare.

The speed advertisement is very similar to that of ecstasy, however much less realistic. The girl scratching her wrists scene is just over the top; nevertheless as the percentage of people trying speed is lower than that of ecstasy it should find an inquisitive audience. Most people who have seen someone strung out on speed will identify with some of the images however the situations could have been better presented. Why they show someone in a shopping mall having a panic attack is beyond me. They were on the right track but have missed a good chance to present the effects of speed in a realistic light.

Overall the advertisements are disappointing. Two missed opportunities I believe come from

... CONTINUED PAGE 11

It's been a busy time in the area of policy relating to young people since the last YIKES! update. Here's an overview of some of the issues that have been on the agenda.

A Fairer Victoria

The Bracks Government released their social policy statement 'A Fairer Victoria: Creating opportunity and addressing disadvantage.' The statement outlines how the Government will work towards achieving the objectives it outlined in the earlier released policy discussion paper 'Challenges in addressing disadvantage in Victoria.' Some specific strategies relating to young people include:

- The establishment of the Office for Children and a new Children's Act
- The 'Getting young people back on track' initiatives relating to supporting young people's education and training needs and engagement including some focus on the needs of young people with a disability, boosting youth mentoring, supporting LLEN's, refurbishing some housing for young people in out of home care and raising the age limit of the Children's Court from 17 to 18
- The appointment of a Child Safety Commissioner
- A new program for intensive treatment at an earlier stage for young people aged 16-25 years who present with emerging mental health problems for the first time
- A commitment to strengthen links between communities with more flexible and frequent public transport services in growth areas as part of the

Government's Metropolitan transport Plan and providing more community buses.

Some of these strategies have been discussed in the budget breakdown on page 9.

The statement also includes many early childhood focussed initiatives. More information can be found by downloading the document from www.dpc.vic.gov.au

Child Safety Commissioner

Mr Bernie Geary OAM has been appointed as Victoria's first Child Safety Commissioner. Formerly Executive Director of Jesuit Social Services in Melbourne, Mr Geary has extensive experience in the community and welfare sectors. The Children and Young People's Commission Coalition looks forward to working with Bernie in his new role.

Children and Young Person's Act

Draft legislation of the Children and Young Person's Act is currently being written and is anticipated for release in late July. The Government will release the draft legislation and a white paper that will consolidate information about the review, to the public at around this time. The Government is planning further community consultations around the review to take place in August. It is anticipated that legislation will be presented to Parliament later this year.

Senate Mental Health Review

Last edition, Matthew Hamilton from Orygen Youth Health presented an

overview of the issues relating to young people and mental health, and related them to the Senate Inquiry into Mental Health. The broad reaching inquiry has now received submissions. To read YACVic's submission please see our website soon, also more info on page 6.

Education and Training Review

Another far-reaching inquiry that has recently closed for submissions is the State Government Education and Training Legislation Review. The review, which is examining the 15 existing pieces of education and training legislation in Victoria with a view to streamlining legislation and proposing a new, updated act. The discussion paper asked more specifically for comment on what new legislation might look like. To access YACVic's submission please see our website soon.

Governance in Schools review

The Department of Education is also conducting a review of School Governance in Victorian Government Schools. The review discussion paper asks for feedback on the role and functions of schools councils, the roles and responsibilities of principals and school councils, how these might be reflected in legislation, and what would make effective governance standards for school councils. It also explores the issues of membership, support and governance structures. Submissions closed on the 30th of May. For more information on the review see the Department of Education and training website www.det.vic.gov.au

For further info please contact Jen Rose, YACVic Policy Officer, 9620 4820 or jrose@yacvic.org.au

Postgraduate courses in Adolescent Health and Welfare

Despite appearances to the contrary, current evidence in the health field is highlighting a number of health problems affecting rural youth in particular. For young people in this demographic there's a disproportionately high incidence of mental illness and suicide, substance abuse and dependence, eating disorders, accidental and intentional injury, and violence. In recognising adolescence as the point when many of these behaviours begin, and that prevention and appropri-

ate intervention are vital for healthy youth development, postgraduate courses in adolescent health and welfare have been developed at the Centre for Adolescent Health in Melbourne, which is affiliated with the University of Melbourne and the Department of Pediatrics at the Royal Children's Hospital. Their mid-year uptake for the Graduate Diploma of Adolescent Health and Welfare, which starts on 21 July, is now underway. The course is taught by pro-

fessionals from a wide range of backgrounds, and combines high-quality learning with workplace experience.

For information on all their courses for professionals who work with young people, see: <http://www.rch.org.au/cah/education/> or phone: Merran Guest (03 9345 6671); Rachel Chamberlain (ph: 03 9345 6673); or email education.training@rch.org.au or merran.guest@rch.org.au



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Young People & Public Space...

An action based community forum

Give your input... kickstart action!

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria in conjunction with the Public Space Action Group will be holding a half-day forum on public space issues for young people.

Professor Rob White, The University of Technology
Marianne Clancy, YACVic 'Hangout Get Together', project consultant
Dr Phil Crane, The Queensland University of Technology

On 17th June, 2010 9.00am to 12.15 at Deakin's National Australia Bank Meeting
800 Bourke Street, opposite the Telstra dome (the 48 tram)
\$18 for YACVic Members, \$38 for non YACVic Members and
\$7 for young people under 18 (space included, membership to YACVic)
Morning tea provided. Places limited. RSVPs essential.

For more details or to RSVP please feel free to contact YACVic on (03) 9470 0999 or info@yacvic.org.au or see our website www.yacvic.org.au

Public Space issues are also being an effective focus for the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. For more information visit www.yacvic.org.au



Drugs: A Change Of Perception

FROM PAGE 8... an education standpoint. It was found in the report cited above that people respond more to educators with practical drug experience. Why does the government not act on its own research and employ these methods? If they are truly trying to change our perceptions of drugs, we need these issues presented by people with more than theoretical experience. The current series of drug advertisements are mediocre as they are obviously signed off by politicians who lack real drug experience. The second is education itself. While it has been found that the media influences people's ideas concerning drugs³, it has also been found that the education within our schools is perceived to be both 'haphazard and somewhat unbalanced'⁴. What exactly happens when these drugs ads are taken off the air? Are the problems somehow magically solved? Perhaps if the government spent more money moulding young people's perceptions through education, rather than trying to change the ingrained views they have later in life, we would grow a more informed society. One that can decide for itself whether its worth taking the risk rather than the government dictating to us that its simply not... with few people listening.

1. Finding from the 'Formative research with young Australians to assist in the development of the National Illicit Drugs Campaign'. Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra, Clark G, Scott N, Cook S (2003).
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2003. *Statistics on drug use in Australia 2002*. AIHW cat. no. PHE 43. Canberra: AIHW (Drug Statistics Series no. 12). Pg. 20
3. Clark G, Scott N, Cook S (2003). 'Formative Research with Young Australians to Assist in the, Development of the National Illicit Drugs Campaign'. Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra, pg. 38
4. Clark G, Scott N, Cook S (2003). 'Formative Research with Young Australians to Assist in the, Development of the National Illicit Drugs Campaign'. Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra, pg. 38

Tom Griffin is the author of *Playgrounds*, a forthcoming novel on the Melbourne dance scene. See www.whatisplaygrounds.com

The opinions expressed in the Opinion Piece are not necessarily those of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. Got something to say? Why not submit an opinion piece for our next issue. Email the Communications Officer on lmcdonald@yacvic.org.au

FReeZACentral

FReeZACentral is giving young Victorians aged 15 to 25 the opportunity to get started in the music industry with a series of free workshops to be held in Werribee, Bendigo, Warrnambool, Brunswick, Horsham, Wodonga, Bairnsdale & Melbourne CBD.

Feedback from young people at last year's workshops showed they valued most the informative content; inspiring role models; expert speakers who know what they're talking about; rare access to music industry insiders and a friendly, approachable atmosphere.

Amongst the 500 young people expected to attend this year's workshops, 50 young people aged 18 to 25 will be selected to join the FReeZACentral Mentoring Program. One-on-one mentoring from music industry professionals gives young people inside industry perspectives, plus tailored assistance for their careers in areas such as event management, marketing and promotion, technical support and performance. All mentorees gets hands-on experience in their chosen field by helping to organise and run the FReeZACentral Tour, a statewide showcase of young talent to be held in late 2005.

All workshops run from 9.30am-3.30pm. Workshops are free and include a free pizza lunch.

June 25 - Werribee Youth Resource Centre

July 1 - Bendigo Town Hall

July 5 - Warrnambool Performing Arts Centre

July 8 - Brunswick Town Hall

July 13 - Wimmera HUB, Horsham

July 20 - Wodonga Conference Centre

July 22 - Bairnsdale Secondary College

July 23 - Victoria University, Melbourne

Register online at

www.freezacentral.vic.gov.au or contact

The Push on 03 9380 1277.

FReeZACentral is funded by the Department for Victorian Communities and managed by The Push and Mushroom Marketing. FReeZACentral is supported by Victoria University and the Council of Victorian YMCAs.

Metropolis World Congress - Berlin 2005

The Victorian Government joined with The City of Melbourne and VicUrban in sponsoring two young people to attend the youth forum of the Metropolis World Congress held in Berlin last month.

With a passion for Aboriginal youth welfare and public spaces in sustainable cities, Nayuka Hood and Barend Meyer, both 20, joined 88 young people from around the world to share their views.

Currently studying sociology and politics at the University of Melbourne, Nayuka focused her presentation on the relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community in Melbourne, the differences between the cultures and the education opportunities available to young Aboriginals.

"Aboriginal affairs are a passion for me - I have an Aboriginal background and have worked in a number Aboriginal community organisations in Melbourne. Attending the forum was such a great opportunity - I really enjoyed hearing about what young people from other countries are passionate about," Nayuka said.

An architecture student at RMIT University, Barend is interested in how the shaping of vital parts of our city, such as public space, will be influenced by predicted population growth in Melbourne's urban centres.

"I feel it's important that these matters are discussed at forums like this, not only because public space is important to how young people interact socially, but also because generational change will become pivotal in addressing global and local issues. The congress was a wonderful opportunity to hear the values of youth from around the world," Barend said.

Metropolis is an international organisation that fosters cooperation and exchange of information between cities. As part of Metropolis' triennial congress, this year's Youth Forum, entitled Young People for the Future: My City - My Visions for 2005, aimed to involve young people in urban development projects.

Up Coming

FORUMS

Space Invaders—Young people and Public Space

When: Friday 17 June 9–12.30pm
Where: Docklands National Australia Bank, 800 Bourke St, Melbourne

A YACVic forum (see flyer page 10) with a youth policy and advocacy focus in conjunction with Public Space Action Group is to be held in Melbourne.

Speakers are Professor Rob White, The University of Tasmania, Garner Clancy, Project Consultant for the YAPA 'Hanging Out Together' project and Dr Phil Crane, The Queensland University of Technology.

For more info see the flyer on page 10 or contact YACVic on 9612 8999.

People, Profit & Public Places

A Public Space Action Group forum to explore issues around young people and shopping centres.

When: Friday 17th June, 1– 4.30pm
Where: Community and Reception Centre, 801 Main Road, Eltham
Cost: \$10 (includes afternoon tea)

Keynote speakers are Garner Clancy, Project Consultant for the YAPA 'Hanging Out Together' project and Dr Phil Crane, The Queensland University of Technology

This forum is for young people, youth workers, shopping centre management companies, shopping centre security supervisors, traders groups, members of the Victoria Police and Council planners (town, social and strategic).

For registration or info contact: Lisa Said on 9433 33277 or lisa.said@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

GRANTS

City of Melbourne Community Service Grants

Applications are open for City of Melbourne 2006 Community Services Grants Program in the following categories: Children's Services, Ethnic Meals Subsidy, Youth, City Safety, Community Information and Support.

Organisations must be not-for-profit and offer a project that primarily benefits the community in the City of Melbourne. The deadline is Friday 1 July 2005.

Briefing sessions designed to help community organisations with submitting an application are to be held.

When: Wednesday 8 June 2005

Where: Meeting Room, North Melbourne Town Hall Arts House, Corner Queensberry and Errol streets, North Melbourne

Times: 10am - noon and 2pm - 4pm

Where: Dousta Galla Community Health Centre, 30-38 Gatehouse Dr, Kensington Banks

Time: 6.15pm - 8.15pm

Please contact the City of Melbourne on 9658 9658 to register your attendance by Monday 6 June 2005

CONFERENCES

Challenge, Debate, Inspire, Survive, Adolescent Health 2005

When: 10-11th November, 2005

Where: Melbourne, Australia

The Centre for Adolescent Health presents the 4th Annual Australian and New Zealand Adolescent Health Conference.

Key themes will include mental health, substance use and working more effectively with young people, with the aim of building shared visions and commitment towards improved adolescent health.

This conference will integrate the diverse perspectives of people who work with, for and about young people.

For details about the conference, including call for abstracts visit www.rch.org.au/cah. The deadline for abstract submissions is July 29th, 2005.

For further info contact the Conference Organiser, Kate Wilson: +61 3 9345 4835 or email cah.conference@rch.org.au
Website: www.rch.org.au/cah

Amnesty International Youth Conference on Human Rights,

Amnesty International, South Australia/Northern Territory are running its first regional youth conference on human rights.

When: 12–14 August

Where: UniSA—City East Campus

They are seeking expressions of interest for workshop facilitators with experience in campaigning and activism. They are also seeking artists—musicians, performers, young artists, street theatre groups and dancers.

For more info contact Maud Brischoux, Youth Conference Coordinator, Amnesty International/NT on 08 8221 5979

KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED FOR...

Drug Action Week

Each year the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA) hosts Drug Action Week. Drug Action Week is a national week of activities to raise awareness about alcohol and other drug issues and to promote the achievements of those who work to reduce drug related harm.

When: 20–24 June

Where: All over Australia

The strength of Drug Action Week is the diverse array of activities that are held all around Australia to mark the week. Last year more than 450 events took place including resource launches, displays, workshops, open days, bus tours and art exhibitions.

We encourage you to get involved by holding a Drug Action Week event in your area. Just think about the message you would like to get across and how best to do it! The more organisations and groups that hold events, the more information we can get out to communities, educators, individuals, the media and politicians about drug related issues.

For more info: The Drug Action Week website is the key source for Drug Action Week information, resources, downloads and the National Calendar of Events. The site will be updated regularly, so keep visiting www.drugactionweek.org.au