

It's been just over 12 months since the **Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances (Volatile Substances) Act 2003** came into being. This piece of legislation was an interesting one for young people and the community services sector because it was primarily concerned with the health and welfare of those it targeted rather than criminalising their behaviour. 12 months on the Act is into another interesting phase—a review of its implementation and success with recommendations to be made regarding its future.

Background

In July 2004, new laws came into effect giving police powers to intervene with young people using volatile substances. The laws do not make it an offence to possess or inhale volatile substances but do give police the power, without a warrant:

- ♦ to search young people under the age of 18 years who are inhaling or will inhale a volatile substance
- ♦ to seize a volatile substance or an item used to inhale a volatile substance
- ♦ to apprehend and detain young people under 18 years of age who are inhaling or have recently inhaled a volatile substance and are likely by act or neglect to cause immediate serious bodily harm to himself or herself or some other person.

The powers are subject to certain safeguards which state that when using the powers, police must:

- ♦ inform the person of the officer's name, rank and place of duty, and if requested, do so in writing

- ♦ produce the officer's identification, unless the officer is in uniform
- ♦ inform the person that it is not an offence to possess or inhale a volatile substance but that the officer has the power to search for and seize volatile substances and items used to inhale them and may use reasonable force to do so
- ♦ make a record of every search, seizure and/ or detention conducted, regardless of whether any volatile substance or item is located

- ♦ provide a copy of the record of the search, seizure or detention to the young person if the young person requests a copy, within 12 months of the search.

The Sunset Clause and Review Process

Importantly, the legislation has a "sunset" clause, which means that the legislation had to be monitored and reviewed for 2 years, after which time it will need to pass through parliament again to remain in effect.

As part of the review process a Reference Group was established that includes representatives from youth, drug and alcohol, legal, and Aboriginal services, the Departments of Justice, Human Services and Victorian Communities and Victoria Police.

The review process will be concluding over the next few months and recommendations will be put to the Victoria Government about the future

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also in this issue...

This August edition of Yikes! brings you lots, including an update on what has happened with the **2004 Chroming Legislation**; Young Carers are a group that just don't hit the radar in terms of government funding so we asked **Sarah Waters and Alice Morgan from Carers Victoria** to give us some insight into the problems young carers can experience; The **Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council (VIYAC)** is back. **Jade Colgan**, the new State Co-ordinator gives you the rundown on what the new resurrected VIYAC will be doing; we have a report from the **Telecommunications Ombudsman** about increasing mobile debt; a report on **Same-Sex Attracted young people**, *Writing Themselves In: 6 Years On* and letters to the editor debating the Industrial Relations Legislation...there's more but maybe you should turn the page 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 4 November.

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.

Wow, August already! As we prepare for another Annual Report and AGM here at YACVic we can't believe the year has gone so fast. The YACVic team recently took a day out of the office to do some planning and "team bonding". With such busy workloads and a small team it is often hard to take a whole day out to do so, but it always proves to be an invaluable exercise.

One of the things we reflected on was ways we can encourage a more active involvement in the organisation from our membership base. This was certainly one of the findings that came out of our strategic planning process and the team identified it as important for all structures within YACVic.

With our AGM due in October now is the perfect time for you as a YACVic member to be thinking about ways you might want to be more involved in the organisation. Included in this mail out are nomination forms for the Youth Reference Group (YRG) (for members under 25), for the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) and for the Board of Governance. I would like to personally encourage you to think about the ways you could get involved.

If you are interested in any of the volunteer roles within the organisation, but would like to know more, please get in touch with me, I would be happy to discuss them in more detail. Alternatively if you would like to talk to a current member of the Board or PAG or YRG, we can arrange that also.

Other bits of exciting news here at YACVic are that we are on the move! We have recently taken on some new projects and are bursting at the seams in our current office. We haven't found a new home yet, but will be moving by the beginning of November. Consequently the next issue of YIKES! will be a bumper December double issue as the move will consume a lot of our

energies in the coming months.

The much-awaited YACVic Strategic Plan will be launched at our AGM in October, which will be hosted by the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs, Minister Jacinta Allan. The AGM will celebrate five years of YACVic being re-funded in our current incarnation and will be both an opportunity for us to thank those who have built YACVic over the past years and to look forward to the next five or ten! Please see the enclosed papers for your invitation to the AGM and nomination forms for YACVic's committees.

See you at the AGM in October!

Georgie Ferrari
Executive Officer
gferrari@yacvic.org.au



Georgie presenting at the International Association of Adolescent Health 8th World Congress in Portugal in May.

CHROMING LEGISLATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of the legislation. The process to date has involved consultations with service providers, police and residential care units. Much of the data collected indicates that the legislation is working well from some perspectives.

YACVic, Youthlaw and the Federation of Community Legal Centres, who are all represented on the Reference Group, are very keen to ensure that the voices of young people are included as part of the review process and we are seeking the support of services in helping young people to feed into this review.

A survey has been developed that asks young people about their recent encounters with police where the legislation may have been used. We are asking that service providers who work with young people who may have had contact with police on matters to do with chroming fill in the survey with the young people and post them back to YACVic. The survey is completely anonymous and no identifying information on either the young person or the service will be collected.

If your service has contact with young people who may chrome and you are interested in participating in the research, please contact Georgie Ferrari on 9612 8922 or email gferrari@yacvic.org.au. Alternatively if you have any case studies like the one featured below, these can also be emailed to YACVic.

Article written by Paula Grogan, Youthlaw, Sarah Nicholson, Federation of Community Legal Centres and Georgie Ferrari, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

The *Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* can be found at www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au.

Case study – Chroming in a refuge

We had an 18 year old young man who had been a long term and frequent chromer. He was referred from a hospital he was taken to by ambulance after an episode of chroming.

Chroming often compromised his safety, particularly when using alone in public places, making maintaining stable accommodation problematic.

A range of strategies were adopted by the refuge in an attempt to reduce his use on site with little success. Eventually he was placed on his own in a 2 bedroom unit supported by the refuge staff on site to minimise his impact on other residents.

The staff's ability to intervene when the young man was chroming on site was ineffective as he would refuse to stop and sometimes become aggressive. Our refuge facility works in a harm minimisation framework as opposed to a zero tolerance approach but harm minimisation strategies are difficult to negotiate with young people who are chroming due to the nature of the substance itself.

In considering strategies to maintain the young man in housing safely for himself and other residents, contact was made with local police to discuss the possibility of their support when he was chroming on site. Their view was that the new chroming laws were about young people in public places and didn't apply to our setting. They

would only respond to an incident where people's direct safety was threatened not the actual incidence of chroming at the refuge.

Although we do not support police interventions as the best possible way to support young people it was interesting to note that the police's view on 'people's direct safety' did not take into account the safety of the young person who is taking the substance. From our point of view, the police were viewing the issue of chroming and the changes in the chroming laws from a punitive perspective on the person who is using.

Ultimately, we were able to support the young man until he voluntarily entered a detox program, he returned back to our facility for a short while until he was accepted into a rehab program where young people were supported accepting that they were unable to maintain themselves without chroming.

This is a true case study from a Melbourne refuge. In addition to services taking part in the research we are interested in getting any case studies from services who have had either negative or positive experiences with regard to chroming and the new legislation. See the article above for more information.

WHO CARES FOR THE YOUNG CARERS?

By Sarah Waters & Alice Morgan, Carers Victoria

Carers Victoria is currently undertaking work to raise awareness amongst service providers, schools and health care professionals to a growing issue effecting approximately 388,800 young people nationwide.

Kelly's storyⁱ

Kelly's mum was involved in a car accident when Kelly was 10 years old. Since that time, Kelly has been the primary carer for her mum. Kelly also has a little sister living at home, but as Kelly says, "I care more for mum than her – she helps me care for mum." Kelly admits that she takes on all of the caring role by herself and that she gets very little support. "I am too busy with important stuff to think about anything else". Once, when Kelly did ask for help, when her mum was leaving hospital, she said

"no doctors would explain anything. I kept asking, but I just kept being told that she's fine. But when she came home she wasn't fine... and I was scared, I did not know what to do or how to help her".

Kelly thinks she was ignored because she was young, so now she copes on her own and keeps her feelings to herself, even though she constantly feels worried or guilty whenever she is not able to be with her mum. She adds "...it's hard to trust people ... And I can care better for her than the nurses anyway...it's just a job to them".

Michaels' story

Michael is 16 years old and cares for his older brother, Kevin who has a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Michael has been caring for Kevin since he was in primary school but doesn't see himself as a carer. "It's just what I have to do ...just part of being in a family" he explains. Monitoring Kevin's medication, attending appointments with doctors, visiting Kevin in hospital, cooking and cleaning are other ways Michael supports Kevin and his family. Michael recently had to call the Crisis Assistance Team when Kevin experienced a critical attack of the voices. Michael often feels worried about Kevin and this worry distracts him from his school work, and often stops him from going out with his friends. Michael hasn't told anyone at school about Kevin or the situation at home, preferring to make up excuses for his lateness than explaining the real reason. Michael hopes one day to go to university to study biology and wants to get his drivers license "so I can drive Kevin around the place and save lots of time not catching public transport".

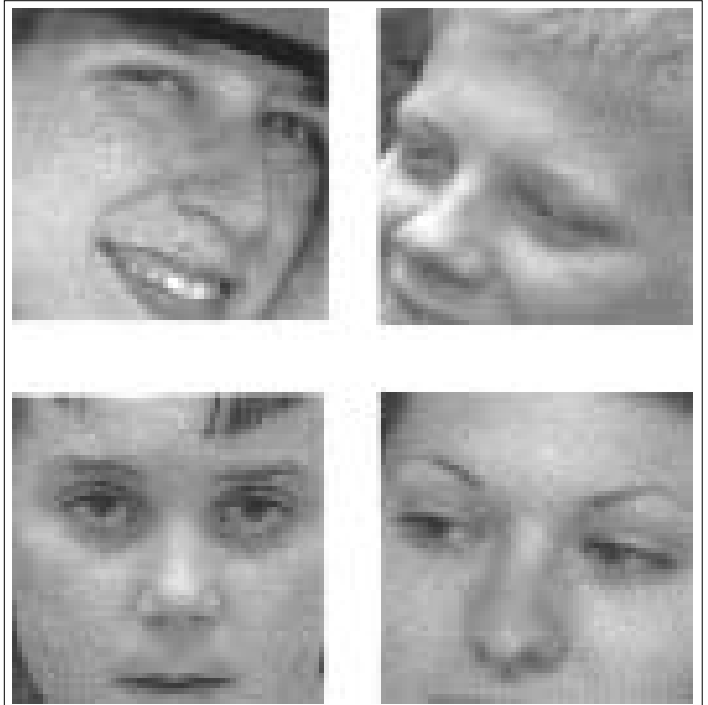
Young Carers. Who are they?

Among the hidden workforce of family carers in the community is a largely unrecognised group of vulnerable young people. Like Kelly and Michael, young carers are people who undertake significant caring responsibilities for a family member or friend, who have a disability, chronic or mental illness or who are frail aged.

The last census estimated that:

- ♦ there are 388,800 carers under the age of 26 years in Australia and 18,800 of these are primary carers
- ♦ 17% of carers in Australia are under 26 years of age
- ♦ 6-10% of young people under 26 years of age in Australia are informal carersⁱⁱ.

What do young carers do?



Young carers often perform major care tasks for the person they are caring for dependant on their condition or illness. General responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, paying the bills and specific care tasks such as making appointments, assisting with mobility and grooming are not uncommon to young carers.

What are the effects?

Although young carers identify that they are the main provider of many of these activities of daily living within their household, they also often distinguish that the constant concern or worry associated with caring for someone within their household as being more of an issue than these tasks. Cheering up, consoling a crying family member and talking a family member through a difficult period, are all part of emotional caring.

Caring for an unwell family member or friend can negatively impact on a young persons health and wellbeing, they become at risk of poor health which can be underpinned by a lack of self-care, sleep deprivation and anxiety. The amount of time that caring occupies can effect a young persons ability to participate in social activities, paid work and relationships.

Carers Victoria

A young carer featured in Carers Victoria's *Just care for us* DVD outlining the caring experience of five young carers, reflected upon her experiences at school

"My schooling was effected at one point, I remember sitting in class and just feeling so sick and having anxiety attacks, just worrying about mum at home. It just wasn't worth going".

Young carers who participated in the Youth Coalition of the ACT's recent young carers study shared their experiences of fear of harassment; fear of attracting inappropriate intervention and threatening family privacy prevented them sharing their caring experiences with the outside worldⁱⁱⁱ.

Many young carers also state they would not change their caring role, and they treasure the experience. One young carer involved in the Carers Victoria project stated,

"It's hard, but what you can take out of it can be a precious gift".

Other young carers say:

"I now see how much I can actually do for others instead of just laying around the house".

"I'm a good helper. I feel good about myself because I can do something for others".

"I'm more responsible am happy all the time even though I'm put through a lot".

Support for Young Carers

Identifying young carers is the first step in beginning to support their needs. Teachers, youth workers, counsellors, health professionals etc can all play a role in recognising young carers and supporting them with the effects of the caring responsibilities they manage. Linking young carers with suitable supports in the community contributes also.

i Taken from: Young Carers Research Program: final report. Carers Australia. September 2001 p 22.

ii Carers Australia, "Young Carers Research Report: Final Report", 2001, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney. p 2.

iii Moore, T, "Reading Between the Lines: Listening to Children and Young People about their Experiences of Young Caring", 2005, Youth Coalition of ACT, Canberra .p 65

iv Moore, T, "Reading Between the Lines: Listening to Children and Young People about their Experiences of Young Caring", 2005, Youth Coalition of ACT, Canberra. P 33

Information about relevant services and supports for Young Carers can be obtained by calling the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636. This Careline provides information and personal support to young carers and has access to Library and Information Distribution services.

Carers Victoria is the only state-wide organisation in Victoria that has carers as its primary focus. It provides information and support, education and training, counselling, policy and advocacy services to unpaid carers who look after family members or friends who have a chronic or acute condition, mental illness, disability, or who are frail aged.

Carers Victoria employ a part time young carer worker who provides Community Education, training and Development. Information about Carers Victoria can be found on www.carersvic.org.au or by calling 03 9396 9500.

Young Carer Service Provider Network

Carers Victoria will be convening a network of service providers interested in the issues and needs of young carers. Meetings will be held 4–5 times a year to link workers together, share information and resources relevant to work with young carers.

If you are interested in joining this group, or wish to be kept informed via email, contact Alice Morgan (Community Education and Development –Young Carer Focus) at Carers Victoria on 9396 9500 or alicem@carersvic.org.au

Reference List

Carers Australia, "Young Carers Research Report: Final Report", 2001, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney.



UMPIRE HELPS RESOLVE PHONE PROBLEMS

By Phillip Money, Public Relations Manager, Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

Unexpectedly high bills are one of the more unfortunate side effects of young people's attachment to mobile phones.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman deals with complaints about mobile, landline and internet services that consumers have been unable to solve with their provider. Ombudsman John Pinnock says that his office receives more than 60,000 complaints each year.

"Because these are not classified by age, it is hard to determine how high mobile phone debts are affecting young people," he said.

"Individual cases that we deal with suggest that phone debt can have a significant impact on a young person and their immediate family".

One example that the Ombudsman's office dealt with involved a young woman who incurred a \$7000 bill over a month after responding to a magazine ad for a premium rate SMS service. Part of the

reason for the large bill was that the woman was receiving incoming messages, which she was unable to stop, every few minutes.

As she was under 18, the woman's mobile phone account was in her father's name and he was unable to reach a suitable payment arrangement with the provider. He then approached the TIO. The TIO believed that the bill was not fair and reasonable for several reasons

- ◆ the bill was not typical of the woman's normal usage
- ◆ the company had not notified her the charges were accruing at such a rapid rate
- ◆ she was unable to stop the incoming premium-rate messages

The woman's experience may be an indication of a wider problem. In the three months to March this year, the Ombudsman received 560 complaints about premium-rate SMS services, compared with just over 100 complaints in the three months to December 2004.

Mr Pinnock said that as an independent umpire, there was no guarantee that his office would decide a case in favour of the young person concerned. Nevertheless, he was concerned that young people may not be aware of his office. "Awareness levels of our service increases with age," he said.

"For example, only about a quarter of people between 18 and 24 are aware that there is a telecommunications ombudsman. This compares with about 60 per cent of people over 50.

"We are not necessarily seeking more complaints from younger people, but we see it as important that they, and their parents, know that there is a free and independent umpire available when problems arise with a landline, mobile or internet service provider".

Complaints may be lodged on 1800 162 158 or through the TIO website at www.tio.com.au.

SPACE INVADERS FORUM A BIG SUCCESS *By Jen Rose*

The Space Invaders? Young People and Public Space forum, hosted on the 17th of June was a great success with young people, youth and community sector representatives, local and state government representatives and academic's coming together to share information about young people and public space. The forum has given a kick-start to a community campaign to protect young people's equitable access to public space.

The day provided an opportunity for participants to hear from interstate speakers with expertise in the field of young people and public space, and then to have their say about young people's access to public spaces and how this can be supported and improved.

The forum was an initiative of the Public Space Action Group (PSAG), a network of community and youth sector organisations advocating for young people's equitable access to public spaces and convened by YACVic. At the time the forum was organised, members of the PSAG included the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, Youthlaw, the Western Young

People's Independent Network and the Equal Opportunity Commission.

Speakers included Dr Phil Crane from the Queensland University of Technology, Professor Rob White from the University of Tasmania and Garner Clancy who is currently engaged in a 'Hanging out Together', project at the Youth Action and Policy Association NSW.

Group discussions asked participants to draw on their own experiences to paint a picture of current issues for young people relating to public space and how the community was responding to these issues, and who was initiating those responses.

Groups also shared ideas on how to ensure that children and young people are involved in discussions and decision making about public space issues.

The following are some issues that were raised in the group discussions:

- ◆ There is a culture of fear and anxiety about young people in public spaces. In this climate, young people's own concerns for their safety were often not

acknowledged

- ◆ Concerns with the treatment of young people by shopping centre security guards and in other spaces
- ◆ Young people reported being 'moved on' to other spaces by security guards resulting in young people being placed at risk by being forced into unsupervised areas
- ◆ The value of engaging young people in discussions and decision making about public space in improving understanding about how young people use public space and why
- ◆ When creating spaces targeted at young people for example skate parks, there is a need to think of inclusive activities and spaces that recognises young people's diverse interests and needs
- ◆ The value of challenging stereotypes about young people and highlighting the positive experiences in improving community relationships
- ◆ The importance of preserving and creating spaces for socialisation
- ◆ The changing nature of public space and challenges and opportunities given the increasing privatisation of 'public' spaces

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VIYAC is up and running again!

Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council

A message from the VIYAC State Coordinator, Jade Colgan.



Hi there all, I'm the new State Coordinator of the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council, I'm 23 yrs old and am Aboriginal. My tribe is the Barkindji Tribe and we are known as the "River people". Barkindji people are from the Mildura and Wilcannia area. I have graduated high school and have a degree in the Arts – Recreation Leadership, from Victoria University of Technology Victoria. I am really excited and optimistic about VIYAC and can't wait to see where the program is headed. The possibilities are endless as there is so much room for positive development, growth and achievement for Indigenous young people.

So you might be asking "what is VIYAC?"

VIYAC stands for the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council. It is an initiative that is funded by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and supported by the Office for Youth. VIYAC will facilitate the voice of young Indigenous Victorians on issues that affect them.

Indigenous youth now have a right to have their opinions heard. Their much needed voice will go toward making sure that issues affecting them are in tune with their background, community and aspirations.

The program objectives may help you to understand VIYAC a little better:

1. To be a voice for Indigenous youth
2. To be heard by the Government
3. To provide a mechanism to voice youth concerns to older people
4. To bring Indigenous youth and the broader community together
5. Promote a sense of pride in being young and Indigenous
6. To affect positive change for Indigenous youth
7. Improve quality of life for Indigenous youth
8. To enable Indigenous youth to have a say
9. Prepare Indigenous youth as best we can, to be future leaders
10. To provide support to youth to realise their independence
11. To make Indigenous youth aware of the opportunities that are available to them

VIYAC can help young Indigenous people by being a voice for them and simply just being here to listen. In the past the voices of young Indigenous Victorians have not been heard to their full potential. VIYAC will allow youth to speak up about any issues that young Indigenous people in Victoria deal with. VIYAC can also be a vehicle that can help youth to have their say by accessing both government and non-government organizations, along with others in the community. There are five regions in Victoria and they are: North West, North East, Gippsland, Central (Melb) and Western Region, as well as two Torres Strait Islander Community members.

An update on VIYAC

VIYAC has made some really positive steps in establishing a sound and productive program. We have devised a brochure that has gone out to contacts throughout Victoria.

We have also established a Reference Group of up to ten people who met for their first meeting on the 1st of July. The Reference group members are all prominent members of the Indigenous Community and are there for the state co-ordinator and regional representatives to use as contacts, support, and guidance.

We have also have made a "call out" for new regional representatives. The feedback has been steady but we still need more applicants! These Regional Representatives will be young Indigenous peoples dedicated to making a change and improving the life of Indigenous youth across Victoria. They will be a point of contact for the State Coordinator, attend VIYAC meetings and be a voice for Indigenous youth in their communities!

These VIYAC Regional Representatives will be voluntary and

- ♦ Have a strong passion and drive to help and develop the Indigenous youth in their region and the whole of Victoria
- ♦ Understand the issues affecting Indigenous youth
- ♦ Be a point of contact for the State Coordinator
- ♦ Help promote the needs of Indigenous youth in their region

We are currently seeking 2 volunteer regional representatives for each of the 6 regions above. If you are a young Indigenous person who wants to get involved, or you know someone who might be interested then contact us here at VIYAC! Remember everyone can make a difference.

Contact me, Jade Colgan, to become a VIYAC Regional Representative or to simply have a chat about the program, from Wednesday to Friday on phone (03) 9612 8919 or email at viyac@yacvic.org.au



WRITING THEMSELVES IN AGAIN: 6 YEARS ON

By Sally Goldner, YACVic staff member

"Graham Kennedy was heterosexual. Graham Kennedy was HIV negative". I doubt that would have been a Derryn Hinch exclusive. Yet people think it's a big deal if someone is same-sex attracted (SSA) and/or HIV positive and then try to make something derogatory out of it—and that happens to Australian young people every day.

On the same day Graham Kennedy died (25 May), the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) released *Writing Themselves In Again: 6 Years On*, surveying the lives of 1749 SSA young people. It follows the groundbreaking *Writing Themselves In* report released in 1998 that surveyed the lives of 750 SSA young people.

The major positive is that more SSAYP are disclosing their sexuality earlier to supportive people, which must help relieve some of the isola-

tion they face. Unfortunately, a major negative finding is that the percentage of young SSA people receiving bullying in schools has worsened over the last 6 years from 69% to 74%. The extreme nature of the violence is also disturbing e.g.

"School - daily bashing, taste testing of the urinals or making sure people's shit was the right colour." (Kevin, 17 years)

The report shows clearly a direct correlation between nature of abuse towards SSAYP (none, verbal or physical) and the probability of harmful behaviour e.g. substance abuse, STIs, self-harm and suicide resulting from this. However, substance abuse had decreased over time, showing some improvement in the social climate for SSAYP. The Internet remained the most important source of information about issues. Sex education at school was considered "useless or fairly useless" by 80% of respondents.

The report gives clear evidence, provides muscle for public policy to deal with relevant issues and enable enforcement re equal opportunity legislation relating to sexual orientation and duty of care.

As this edition of Yikes goes to print, I note the release of the "Celebrating Diversity" CD-Rom by the Eastern Region Gay and Lesbian Youth Project. This excellent resource shows that it is possible to change the culture within a school from homophobic to one that is a celebration of diversity, particularly with a whole-of-school approach. The results of *Writing Themselves In Again: 6 Years On* show the need for a whole-of-system approach...or better still, a whole-of-society approach. Community and political leaders, please take note.

For further info, visit www.latrobe.edu.au/ssay/ and <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/seagroup/web/>

International Association of Adolescent Health 8th World Congress By Georgie Ferrari

I was fortunate to recently attend the 8th World Congress of the International Association of Adolescent Health in Lisbon, Portugal. The Congress brought together approximately 500 young people and workers from around the globe to discuss issues relating to young people's health and wellbeing.

While traditionally the IAAH is a body that has been made up of medical professionals, more recently their membership has diversified to include allied health professionals, social workers, youth workers and individuals with an interest in young people's health and wellbeing in a more holistic sense. This diversification made for a varied and interesting program of presentations and an even more diverse range of delegate from around the world.

The conference theme was *Positive Youth Development*. This was interpreted by keynote speakers and in workshop sessions in a variety of ways that reflected the diversity of the conference participants.

The conference began with a keynote presentation from Michael Resnick, the architect of the risk and resilience framework that is now so frequently referred to and used in youth policy and programming. Professor Resnick is the Director of Healthy Youth Development Prevention Resource Center, Department of Paediatrics, Medical School, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA.

Building on his theories of the importance of connectedness as a protective factor in young people's lives, Prof Resnick drew on new research that suggests we are "hardwired to connect". Expanding on this idea Resnick explained that bonding and connecting stimulate deep reward receptors in the brain, meaning that our earlier theories around the social rewards of connectedness may also be reinforced by biological rewards in terms of brain functioning.

Resnick concluded his presentation with a focus on the social determinants of health, reminding us that

economic disadvantage is related to almost every negative health indicator.

Bob Blum, David Bennett (from the Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health in Sydney) and Peter Watson presented an interesting piece on Youth Health Advocacy. Each explained practical ways of getting messages across to audiences who may have little knowledge (and sometimes little interest) in youth health issues. Blum exhorted participants to use conferences as a tool for change, providing some innovative suggestions around how to ensure the learnings from conferences go beyond those who attend.

I also had the privilege of presenting a workshop on Youth Participation. Presenting the work we did in partnership with the Office for Youth, I outlined our findings and showcased three examples of youth participation from Victoria. Participants in my session had varying levels of understanding of youth participation and some openly expressed their frustra-

Policy Update

Here's an update of some of the happenings in the policy arena of late.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSON'S ACT

The Governments review of the Children and Young Persons Act is continuing, and we can expect to see an exposure draft of the new legislation and a white paper detailing the review process in early August.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The State Government is exploring the question 'Should Victoria have a Charter of Human Rights?' A Human Rights Consultation Committee has been formed to examine this question and has been taking submissions on the issue. Members of the Committee are Professor Georgie Williams (Chair), Ms Rhonda Galbally, Mr Andrew Gaze and Professor Haddon Storey. For a copy of the discussion paper Have your say about human rights in Victoria see www.justice.vic.gov.au/humanrights Youthlaw and YACVic have been consulting directly with groups of young people to ensure that their opinions are included in this very important community debate. We have also devised a submission tool for young people to use to directly submit to the inquiry, which we are

glad to know has been put to use. Submissions were due on the 1st August.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN BILL

Recently Parliament passed the Working with Children Bill, legislating for Working with Children Checks. The Checks will be compulsory for anyone working with children or young people under the age of 18 in a paid or voluntary capacity in Victoria. Some exemptions are provided for, for example in the case of immediate family members volunteering to support an activity their child is involved in. The Checks will be phased in over the next five years, and will be at a cost of \$70 for individuals working in the field, but free for volunteers. The Child Safety Commissioner and the Office for Children will run community education campaigns surrounding the check process.

CHARTER FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

The Office for the Advocate for Children in Care is developing a charter of rights for children and young people in care. The Advocate, Mr Toby O'Connor, has been taking submissions on a charter, examining questions such as 'the rights that

might be included in the charter and how it might best accommodate the needs of children in care or any other aspects relating to the development of the charter by the end of July. The Advocate has been engaging in a community consultation process involving the formation of a stakeholder focus group, regional forums and specific focus groups with Aboriginal communities. For more information on the proposed charter see the discussion paper Development of a charter of rights for children and young people in care at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/advocate

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REVIEW

The Department of Education has received submissions on the education and training review and is now embarking on a second public consultation process, with a white paper being released next month. The review 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.

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

tion and the lack of understanding their organisations had of "true youth participation".

I was able to distribute copies of the three *Taking Young People Seriously* booklets and back issues of *YIKES!*, all of which were readily snapped up by participants.

Personally the conference provided me with a great opportunity to meet and network with workers with young people from all over the world, from a GP in Lebanon who is trying to establish a youth friendly clinic, to a street worker in Venezuela who is struggling to find ways to engage her target group in a youth participation model when so many of their basic needs need attention in the first instance.

SPACE INVADERS FORUM A BIG SUCCESS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

- ◆ Young people's safety and access to public transport being a factor in their experiences of public space

The forum also explored the types of spaces young people use and the purposes, the potential merits and restraints of 'youth specific' spaces and ideas on how to improve young people's equitable access to public space and to resolve conflict where it might arise.

Looking into the future, participants contemplated the questions 'Where to from here? What more can we do?' The proceedings of the forum will be released in a report from the PSAG and YACVic in the coming months, which will outline recommendations

about where a community campaign protecting young people's access to public space might go next.

Special thanks to our speakers, all the volunteers who facilitated groups and took notes on the day, the PSAG and the National Australia Bank for generously providing the venue on the day.

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

In our April issue of Yikes! we ran an article on the proposed Industrial Relations changes written by Vera Smiljanic, a Research Worker at Job Watch. A YACVic member and YIKES! reader responded to that article below. We feel that it is an important issue that may affect young people and needs more debate, therefore we asked the author for a response.

Dear Editor,

Vera Smiljanic's article claiming that young people will "suffer under the Federal Government's proposed Industrial Relations changes" represents a serious misunderstanding of both the Federal Government's proposals, but also the likely effects.

Vera consistently fails to consider the effects of the proposals on currently unemployed young people – people who will gain the most from reforms to the outdated Australian industrial relations system. While she correctly quotes that only 5.1% of all Australians are unemployed (ABS, April 2005), a massive 20% of 15-19 year olds are unemployed, including 25.1% of females in that age bracket. It is unsurprising that this statistic was selectively omitted.

By reducing the barriers to employ people, young people will be the biggest beneficiaries. Various commentators put the job gains at tens of thousands of extra jobs created by these proposals, with some estimates ranging up to hundreds of thousands of extra jobs.

The intellectually shallow argument against industrial relations reforms was demonstrated by the use of some incredibly bizarre "examples." Suggesting that unfair dismissal laws have some connection to young people being assaulted by supervisors are absurd – if a young person is "assaulted by his supervisor with a knife," he should be calling the police and having the supervisor criminally charged - not trying to seek reinstatement to his job under that same supervisor!

Of course, it's easy for a legal centre to argue in favour of the litigation-heavy, adversarial system that we currently have. After all, lawyers are amongst the biggest beneficiaries of the current system, often taking thousands of dollars from the pockets of employers and employees alike. It's disappointing, however, when they put their own self-interest ahead of the 20% of young Australians who are unemployed. The proposed reforms will allow employers to hire more staff without the risk of expensive lawyers and unfair dismissal cases.

YACVic should stop printing material in its newsletters which harms the interests of young unemployed Australians, and instead, support the Federal Government's reforms to create more jobs for young people.

Michael Josem

Author's response.

Your reader Michael Josem has made a number of statements which I would like to correct.

There is no independent research to show that tens of thousands of extra jobs will be created for young people and people in general by removing unfair dismissal laws. Michael doesn't mention who these various commentators are and what independent evidence/research they have to back up their claims.

Job Watch believes that it is important that not only young unemployed people have access to jobs but there are protections in place against young people being harshly, unjustly and unreasonably treated in the workplace and that young people have the ability to earn a decent wage.

We have seen many cases of unfair treatment experienced by young people in the workplace through our telephone advice service, which assists around 20,000 people annually and is staffed primarily by non lawyers. The case studies we quoted in our original article, which Michael describes as "bizarre examples", are the actual experiences of callers to Job Watch. Michael suggests that John—who was assaulted by his supervisor with the knife—should have called the police and had his supervisor charged. John could have done that but that doesn't necessarily mean the police will have enough evidence to charge the supervisor and making a complaint to police won't get John his job back and/or compensate him for the loss of his job at the hands of his employer.

The unfair dismissal system is not a litigation-heavy, adversarial system. Unfair dismissal claims are dealt with by a Tribunal, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC), not a court. After making an unfair dismissal claim an informal hearing is held, known as conciliation, in front of a third party, the conciliator, who tries to assist the employer and employee to come to some agreement. The vast majority of unfair dismissal matters are settled at this stage. Only a small proportion go to the next stage, an arbitration hearing, before a Commissioner at the AIRC. It is a user-friendly system where both the employer and employee can represent themselves; legal representation is not necessary. In fact Job Watch runs a self representation program to enable workers to represent themselves.

Job Watch's primary objective is to assist, represent and advocate on behalf of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in the workplace such as young people. We are a not for profit organization—we do not charge any fees.

Vera Smiljanic

State Government News

Young Entrepreneurs Doing It For Young People

3rd EYE Youth Consultants are Luke Peters and Brad O'Neil. These two young men were inspired to set up their own business after attending a St Lukes program called *The Chutzpah Factory*, a 14 week entrepreneur course. They were so inspired that

"...by the 10th week Luke and I had already run our first workshop for agencies in Bendigo, including J.J workers, youth workers, Centrelink employees, D.H.S employees, job network employees and more."

Their aim is to provide advice and training to organisations involved with youth, from the perspective of young people who have been service users. They are offering services such as interviewing potential employees for organisations, training staff and carers that work with young people, service evaluations and improvement, and motivational talks for young people.

Luke and Brad are excited about what they're doing and what avenues their new venture will take them. Their goal is to have young people be seen as equal no matter who they are, to stop judgment and to help organisations understand young people's needs. They also aim to be role models for disadvantaged young people, by demonstrating that dreams can come true and that they all have gifts and talents that can be used.

For more information contact Brad or Luke on 0400630 504 or (03) 5440 1100 or by email thirdeyeconsultants@hotmail.com



We see it all....

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS PROGRAM

Support services for young people in Victoria will share more than \$4 million in funding through the new Youth Participation and Access Program, which replaces the former Youth Services Program.

From 1 September 2005, the new program will fund 91 organisations across the State to deliver 100 local support services.

Following feedback from the youth sector, the *Youth Participation and Access Program* will provide three-year grants instead of the one-year grants provided by the former *Youth Services Program*.

The program provides funding to community and local government organisations to deliver generalist support and assistance for young people. The goal of the program is to build strong, active and resilient communities by assisting young people to gain the opportunities, skills and recognition for contributing to a full range of social, learning and cultural activities.

For more information about the *Youth Participation and Access Program*, including a list of providers, visit www.youth.vic.gov.au

DON'T LET YOUR SCHOOL MISS OUT ON ADVANCE

It's that time of year again—time for schools to apply for their next round of *Advance* funding. The funding round is now open and available to all Government secondary school campuses across Victoria.

Advance is a unique school-based program that encourages young people's participation in their local community. It provides opportunities for young people to choose, plan and implement projects in partnership with a community organisation.

Over 330 schools are already delivering *Advance* across the state, and there is funding available for all Victorian secondary schools to jump on board. Applications go through a non-competi-

tive process based on the submission of an Expression of Interest.

Applications for this funding round close on Friday 30 December 2005. For more information about the *Advance* program email advance@dvc.vic.gov.au or visit www.youth.vic.gov.au/programs/advance.

MENTORING YOUNG PEOPLE GETS A STATEWIDE BOOST

As part of *A Fairer Victoria*—a new social policy action plan that addresses disadvantage in our community—the State Government has injected \$2.9 million over three years to boost mentoring programs for young people. This will be used to provide funding and tools, like a *Good Practice Guide*, to organisations running programs for young people who are isolated and disadvantaged—either socially, economically or geographically.

Led by the Department for Victorian Communities through the Office for Youth, all Victorian Government departments now share a strategic approach to mentoring, which supports the delivery of high-quality, cost effective programs that meet safety and community standards.

For more information visit www.youth.vic.gov.au.

YOUTHCENTRAL

youthcentral is the Victorian Government's state-of-the-art website for young people in Victoria. It's designed to allow young people to have their say, get involved and have fun along the way.

The site provides stacks of information on issues that matter to young people, like education, careers, health, housing, entertainment, ways to get involved with the community... the list goes on!

With more than 60,000 visitors to the site since it launched in November 2004, *youthcentral* is a great way for young Victorians to connect and share their views.

To see what all the fuss is about visit www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au.

Up Coming

International Youth Day 12 August 2005

YACVic's Annual General Meeting

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria's annual general meeting is coming up so keep the evening free. It's our five year anniversary of re-funding and we have something special planned.

When: Wednesday, 12 October

Where: The Sir Redmond Barry Room,
Level 46, ANZ Tower,
55 Collins St, Melbourne

FORUMS

Youth Housing Forum

Keep an eye out in the coming months for a *Youth Housing Forum*, being jointly hosted by the **Council to Homeless Persons** and the **Youth Affairs Council of Victoria**. The forum will focus on marginal young people and will explore young people's access to housing, issues relating to young people and housing such as support, sustainability and models of housing. It will examine the housing sector and ask where do we need to go from here?

CONFERENCES

Regional Youth Summit

When: 12-14 August 2005
Fri 6pm–Sun 5.30pm

Where: Lake Hume Conference Centre,
Borella Rd, Albury

The United Nations Youth Association (UNYA) Divisions of NSW, Victoria and the ACT have announced that registration for their Regional Youth Summit has opened. The aim of the Summit is to provide the opportunity for students aged

15–18 to gain a broad understanding of the United Nations, greater knowledge of international relations, develop leadership skills and engage in debate on issues of international concern. Delegates will examine issues of international concern ranging from conflict to the environment and aid efforts, as well as experiencing first hand the workings of diplomacy, as they represent and advocate for an 'allo-cated nations' wellbeing—strengthening debating and interpersonal skills.

UNYA will be able to financially support delegates experiencing financial hardship. Registration for the Summit is essential. Forms can be downloaded by following the links at www.unya.asn.au/unrys. Summit places are limited so return registration forms as early as possible. For more info contact: Simon Sheikh, Convenor, UNYC 2006
Ph: 0422 252 483
E: nswtreasurer@unya.asn.au

Amnesty International Youth Conference on Human Rights

When: 12–14 August
Where: UniSA—City East Campus

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

Big Impact Youth work: NSW Youth Work Conference 2005

Date: 13–15 September 2005
Where: Darling Harbour, Sydney

A chance to critically evaluate what the youth sector is doing, and can do, a chance to catch up on the latest research and best practice, and a chance to meet, discuss, debate and network with other youth workers from across the state. We welcome all youth workers, youth service managers, youth advocates and anyone

else working with young people.

The conference brochure and booking can be downloaded from: <http://www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/conference/index.htm>. For more info: Joanne Bennett, YAPA, 02 9319 1100 or info@yapa.org.au

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.

For further info contact the Conference Organiser, Kate Wilson: 03 9345 4835 or email cah.conference@rch.org.au
Website: www.rch.org.au/cah

5th International Conference on Drugs and Young people

When: 24-26 May 2006
Where: AJC Convention Centre,
Randwick, New South Wales

Organised by the Australian Drug Foundation and its Centre for Youth Drug Studies, in partnership with the Ted Noffs Foundation. The theme for this conference is the culture and context of young peoples' drug use across settings. These settings include: bars and clubs, workplaces and schools, public spaces, juvenile justice settings and the web.

For more information please visit www.adf.org.au; email DYP@adf.org.au or tel. 03 9278 8137

NEW MEMBER PROFILE – KATE

Why did you join?

There was a stall at Pushover 2005 and I thought 'why not'

Why do you do what ever it is that you do?

I'm at school because I want to get an education, so I can be whatever I want to be. A lot more opportunities come up if you finish school.

What did you have to do to be able to do this?

Basically stay in school. Keep attending. Try and enjoy myself while I'm at it.

What's your fav food?

Burrito's & Subway

What are the top 3 issues you think young people are experiencing?

Depression, Alcohol and Drugs.

Where do you spend your days?

At school or with my friends, at gigs.

What public spaces do you use most? (Eg shopping centres, streets, train stations etc)

Mostly shopping centres or train stations, (I catch public transport)

What was your worst experience in a public space?

When a man tried to pick me up at the train station!

Do you think young people are prevented from using public space?

I don't think so, I hate it when you're just hanging around down the street and the cops immediately think that you are starting trouble.

Complete this sentence: Young people are...

...the future of this country and in fact the world. We are in desperate need of better things to do that don't cost us so much money.