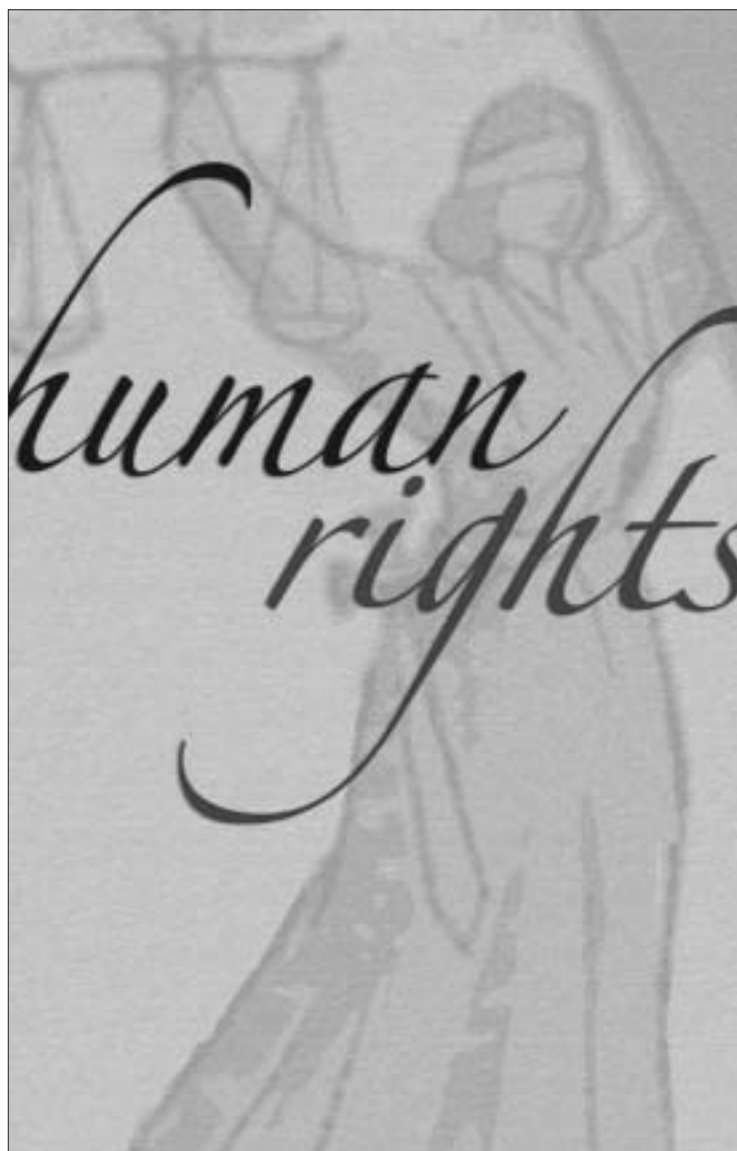


Committee Recommends a Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter for Victoria



The much awaited report from the Human Rights Consultation Committee has been released recommending that the Victorian Parliament enact a Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

The Committee received an unprecedented 2524 written submissions from across the community, showing the very high level of community interest in strengthening protection for human rights in Victoria. Young people from across the state submitted to the inquiry, many through mechanisms established by Youthlaw and YACVic to make submitting a more accessible process. The Committee was able to report that 'Overall, 84 per cent of the people we talked to or received submissions from (94 per cent if petitions and the like are included) said that they wanted to see the law changed to better protect their human rights.'

The Attorney-General, Rob Hulls announced that Victoria was 'set to become the first state to introduce a charter of human rights and responsibilities' when he launched the Committee's report on the 20th of December last year. Mr Hulls highlighted the need for a Human Rights Charter in Victoria when he pointed out that:

"These rights are currently either unprotected or scattered across the statute books haphazardly. Australia is the only Western democracy with no clear human rights protection."

The Committee has recommended that the Charter provide protection for rights that are contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, to which Australia

...CONTINUED PAGE 3

This issue...

The February edition of YIKES! headline story updates you on the **Human Rights Consultation Committee** report. Michelle Marvin reports on the **Federal Governments Mental Health Funding** for young people and Anna Forsyth talks **public space and the commonwealth games**. We have news from VIYAC, the YACVic YRG plus our regular policy report and state government news. Of course there's other things too but you'll need to read them for yourselves! But first see our rogues gallery of staff dogs.....

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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!

Yikes! is YACVic's regular newsletter. The views and opinions contained in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of YACVic. This publication is copyright, articles may be reproduced with permission from YACVic.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to Yikes! are welcome. The deadline for the next edition of Yikes! is **17 March 2006**

INSERTS & ADVERTISING

If you wish to include an insert or advert in Yikes please contact the YACVic Communications Officer on (03) 9267 3766 or email lmcdonald@yacvic.org.au.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

2006 seems bursting with promise and anticipation. This year we will elect a new state government and host the Commonwealth Games and the Office for Youth will release a new youth policy, refreshing and building on Respect: the Government's Vision for Young People. There will be lots going on and YACVic will be right in amongst it!

I read recently that in order to fulfil your new year's resolutions it is best to write them down...so here goes:

This year YACVic will...

- Implement our strategic plan
- Continue to ensure that young people are meaningfully consulted and engaged in our project and policy work
- Conduct some research on Indigenous youth issues in partnership with the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council
- Develop a kick arse state election kit for young people
- Visit more on the ground youth services in metro and regional Victoria

- Establish an advocacy service for young people with disabilities
- Work towards holding a National Youth Conference (the first in 10 years) here in Melbourne in 2007
- Continue to work with and for our members to ensure equity and justice for all young people!

There, it's down in black and white, now it's your job as YACVic's owners and key stakeholders to ensure these resolutions are met.

2006 is the Chinese Year of the Dog, as one website put it, *"it is a year in which controversial issues will be awarded a hearing and unconventional but effective changes will be introduced. Equality and liberty will be advocated by the Dog's noble influence."*

Let's hope so!



Georgie Ferrari
Executive Officer
gferrari@yacvic.org.au

YEAR OF THE DOGS



jades babe



teddy and nelly



scruff



harry



kat



luna



disco



devo

Staff have their fair share of the dog (and cat) kingdom at home.

Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1... is a signatory. YACVic recommended that the Charter also protect the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, rights that recognise the unique status of Indigenous people in Victoria, and Economic, Social and Cultural rights. The Committee has recommended that the 'special significance of human rights to Indigenous people as the traditional owners of the land' be recognised in a preamble to the charter.

Whilst YACVic acknowledges that the creation of a Charter of Rights protecting our civil and political rights is an important and valuable step in strengthening the protection of human rights for Victorians, we will continue to lobby for the broadening of the rights protected by the charter.

YACVic and Youthlaw worked to ensure young people's perspectives were heard in the consultation process. Many young people used a survey devised by Youthlaw and YACVic to submit their own independent response to the Committee and young people participated in six focus groups held in both regional areas and Central Melbourne. Focus groups were conducted with newly arrived and refugee young people in Shepparton, young people in East Gippsland, in Moonee Valley and in the inner city. The results of each focus group were reported in individual submissions to the inquiry. They reported valuable information about the specific human rights concerns of young people from a range of backgrounds, geographic areas and experiences.

Overwhelmingly, the participants were in favour of a Charter and told us that they thought human rights needed to be better protected at a local, state and national level. Thanks go to the Western Young People's Independent Network, Moonee Valley City Council, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, Cutting Edge Youth Services, Frontyard Youth Services and to the CRAYV team in East Gippsland for working with us in making those focus groups possible.

YACVic reported to the Committee that whilst young people are not a homogenous group, young people are discriminated against as a population group and as such need particular assistance in protecting their human rights. Young people's rights at work, rights to participate, rights to privacy, protection from discrimination and rights to freedom of movement are just some of the rights that YACVic is aware are threatened or breached regularly. Whilst the proposed Charter would not protect all of those rights, the enactment of a Charter will stimulate increased dialogue and understanding about human rights in Victoria.

In the report, the Committee highlighted the many benefits of introducing a Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities in Victoria. The community would receive the benefit of the rights listed in the Charter as these rights and responsibilities would be taken into account from the earliest stages of government decision-making and public authorities such as government departments and police would need to comply with the Charter.

You can find out more about the proposed Charter and the recommendations of the Human Rights Consultation Committee by downloading *Rights, Responsibilities and Respect: The Report of the Human Rights Consultation Committee* from the Department of Justice website on www.justice.vic.gov.au/human-rights.

Another recent publication that provides further insight to the issues for young people. More details on *Rights of Passage: A Dialogue with Young Australians about Human Rights* can be found at www.humanrights.gov.au/youthdialogue

Article by Jen Rose, YACVic Policy Officer.

STOP PRESS Howard Dumps Children and Youth

Young Australians are the big losers in the PM's recent ministerial reshuffle. While the reshuffle was anticipated to usher in a more youthful front bench, Prime Minister Howard has dropped Children and Youth Affairs portfolio from his Government altogether.

Sussan Ley, the former Parliamentary Secretary for Children and Youth has been made Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Mal Brough (Caboolture, QLD) takes over from retiring Senator Kay Patterson as Minister for Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs with John Cobb (Dubbo, NSW) taking a junior Minister role for Community Services.

The move has saddened the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition as they were developing a strong and positive relationship with the Parliamentary Secretary. "The young people of Australia have no specific representative in their Government to hear their needs and concerns," AYAC Young Spokesperson Rey Reodica said.

Portfolio from Government

"The interests of young people cannot simply be placed with issues such as family and community services and expected to be given a fair go. Young Australians have a right to fair representation by their Government and this reshuffle is a huge failure in this regard." Mr Reodica said.

YACVic has learnt through our sister organisation in Queensland that Mal Brough has an interest in community services and organizations, which is heartening. However the downgrading of a focus on children and young people from a Minister to a Parliamentary Secretary role in 2004 and now no specific responsibility at all does not bode well for Australia's youth.

YACVic will write to the Prime Minister seeking an explanation for the move and an assurance that young people will not suffer because of it. Watch this space!

Youth Mental Health on the Political Agenda

In late 2005 the Prime Minister John Howard announced \$54 million in Commonwealth funding for the establishment of a National Youth Mental Health Foundation to counter mental health and related substance abuse disorders in young Australians.

Mental health has been the focus of significant media attention over the last six months following the establishment of the Federal Senate *Inquiry into Mental Health* (due to report its findings in March), the national *Not for Service* report from the Mental Health Council of Australia and the Equal Opportunity Commission, and a string of high profile public figures who have revealed their personal battles with mental illness. While the pressure on State and Territory governments to respond to the mental health crisis continues to grow, the Federal Government has targeted significant funds to youth mental health, in its stunning announcement that they will fund a National Youth Mental Health Foundation.

What is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation?

The yet to be named Foundation promises to create a network of "Communities of Youth Services" across Australia. It will provide accessible and effective "youth friendly" integrated services and achieve better levels of clinical and social recovery for young people aged 12-25 experiencing mental illness and related substance abuse disorders.

In addition the Foundation will foster community awareness of youth mental health issues to increase understanding and mental health literacy of young people. It will promote help seeking behaviour amongst young people as well as the development and dissemination of evidence based education and training to build the skills and confidence of GP's and other service providers working with young people with mental health problems. Underpinning this will be the establishment of a Centre of Excellence to undertake and promote evidence-based practice in youth mental health through innovative, clinically focused research.

Why focus on youth mental health?

Adolescence and young adulthood is the peak period for the onset of mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse disorders and psychotic illnesses like schizophrenia, with over 75% of all serious mental health problems commencing before the age of 25. Mental illness and related substance abuse disorders account for an alarming 60% of the total non-fatal burden of disease for young people aged 15-24, making it the single biggest health issue affecting young people. Of the 633,000 young people in Victoria aged 15-24 it is estimated that more than 150,000 of these will experience some form of mental illness in any 12 month period.

If left untreated or poorly treated, mental illness can create significant personal and family distress contributing to academic failure, unemployment, relationship and family breakdown, reduced quality of life and premature death from physical ill health and suicide. Mental illness costs the community billions of dollars a year in direct and indirect costs.

The Victorian Mental Health System—a system in need of reform

Victoria now faces a strategic opportunity to reclaim the title of national leader in mental health, with the impending establishment of the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. The Victorian mental health system is in urgent need of reform and investment. Like a number of youth focused public services, such as Child Protection, public mental health services for young people, through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), currently cease at 18 years of age. As with Child Protection, the ceasing of services at 18 years of age is often detrimental to the on-going health and well-being of young people.

Upon exiting the CAMHS system, young people with ongoing mental health problems are referred into Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS). AMHS offers a generalist mental health service to Victorians aged 16-64. Young people entering this system are treated side by side with adults who may have experienced 30 years of chronic mental health problems. This is often a traumatising and dispiriting experience, and many of the AMHS services have difficulty engaging and effectively treating young people, sometimes with tragic consequences.

By expanding the adolescent component of the existing CAMHS services to cover young people aged 12-25, and enhancing the youth focus through youth friendly environments and engagement strategies, Victoria has the potential to once again lead the way in mental health reform. Targeting government resources to youth mental health is an investment designed to save money, and more importantly lives, in the long run. Through early intervention, many young people can continue their education, remain in employment and stay connected to their families and friends. The cost to the state would be relatively modest. It has been freely accepted by the government and the health bureaucracy that Victoria needs to spend substantially more at the state level on mental health. The advent of the federal investment in youth mental health means that state investment in this arena will have a much greater impact. ORYGEN estimates that such reform would cost the state government \$50 million in capital expenditure and between \$50 and \$100 million in annual recurrent funding. This could be phased in over several years and would require a major planning process and an enhancement and restructure of the adolescent and young adult elements of the public mental health system which would strengthen the system at what is currently its' weakest point.

ORYGEN is urging the Victorian government to take this plan to the next Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in early February at which mental health will be on the agenda. This is a golden opportunity to capitalise on the current imperative for better youth mental health, and institute far-reaching reforms that will significantly benefit future Victorian generations. It's really that easy.

Report by Michelle Marven, Policy, Advocacy and Media Officer, ORYGEN Research Centre. For further info call (03) 9342 3775 www.orygen.org.au

Young People Must Qualify for Public Space as the Games Come to Town

As Victoria prepares for the Commonwealth Games, we have seen the media spotlight turn somewhat predictably to the issue of 'what to do with' the homeless living on the streets of Melbourne. Sadly, it seems to take a major public event for the homeless to receive any significant attention, albeit as a peripheral concern.

Such coverage does nevertheless provide the Council to Homeless Persons with an opportunity to raise important issues about the use of public space by homeless people. Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks the Council faces in this role is to challenge the often very negative perception of young people who occupy public space. A commonly held view is that young people gathering in public places are trouble-makers.

For young homeless people, this form of societal judgment can be particularly damaging given that for this group, the use of public space is a constant reality dictated by circumstance. Public space is often the only place these young people have to interact with peers and to form some sort of identity and support network. Yet, discourses of crime, drunkenness, disorder and the need for supervision are so regularly the focus of media representations of young people and public space. The response has been one of increased control and regulation.

The Liberal Party's 2006 state election policy, Combating Anti-Social Behaviour, argues for the introduction of anti-social behaviour orders and 'move on' laws. Similarly, in February 2005, Crime Prevention Victoria published a discussion paper entitled *A Good Night For All* which recommended the investigation of dispersal legislation to enable police to give a direction to a person in a public place '...if the police officer has reasonable grounds to believe that the person's behaviour or presence in the place is causing or is likely to cause fear to another person or persons' (Inner City Entertainment Precincts Taskforce, 2005). It further recommended that alternative meeting places for young people be established when anti-social behaviour problems occur in entertainment precincts.

What is often forgotten is that living on the street is usually a last resort for young people. Research has shown that young people who are forced to permanently occupy public space experience poor physical health, higher levels of anxiety and depression and higher rates of poor mental health and diagnosable mental illness (Rossiter et al, 2003). Such evidence highlights the disabling and disempowering experiences of many young people who occupy public space. Heightened regulation aimed at excluding young people from public places will only compound these experiences and fail to deal with the underlying problems.

A more sophisticated and nuanced response to young people and public space is required. Of primary importance is the inclusion of young people in the decision-making process. As author Catherine Robinson comments, '[T]here has tended to be an emphasis on the ways in which young people enter and threaten or contest already constructed spaces with their own meanings or spatial requirements. This is a view which potentially (re)pro-

duces street-frequenting young people's marginalisation in hegemonic space, as young people are effectively located outside the processes through which space is produced.'
(Robinson, 2000)

Without genuine consideration of the diverse views and needs of young people in accessing public space, there will never be an adequate response to this issue. What we will continue to see is policy which leads to young people's isolation from public space through the construction of prescribed 'youth specific spaces', consequent 'no go zones' and punitive legal measures.

It is therefore encouraging that the Minister for Housing, Candy Broad, has taken an alternative approach in engaging the sector in collaborative work to establish a Victorian Protocol for People who are Homeless in Public Places. The Protocol, due to be formally announced prior to the Commonwealth Games, aims to ensure that people who are homeless in public places are treated appropriately and that their rights are respected.

In formulating a number of key principles for the Protocol, the Bracks Government has worked with the Council to Homeless Persons as well as a number of other endorsing agencies including homelessness peak organisations, the Victoria Police, a number of city councils and government departments and the Organising Committee for the Games. Such consultative processes form a much better framework for the development of good public space policy in the future. We await the Protocol's implementation before being able to fully assess its effectiveness in improving the experiences of those occupying public space, young and old, during the Commonwealth Games and beyond.

Anna Forsyth is the Youth Policy Officer at the Council to Homeless Persons. She can be contacted on 03 9419 8699.

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Return to Compulsory National Service?

Recently YACVic was asked by the Herald Sun to write an Opinion Piece on the debate of young people and compulsory national service. Georgie Ferrari, YACVic's Executive Officer, submitted the following piece that was published on January 10.

The old adage that says those of us who forget history are destined to repeat it may be true for the NSW Branch of the Young Labor Party who last week called for a return to compulsory national service.

The Whitlam Government abolished Australia's previous National Service scheme in 1972, with good reason. With the onset of the Vietnam War evasion of national service was not uncommon and the prosecution of evaders was often harsh and publicly shaming.

This recent call for a return to a compulsory system that would provide for either community or military service for all young people is a step back in time and would not find widespread support among Australia's youth.

While the sentiments behind Young Labor's call are well intentioned they miss the mark in terms of why and how young people volunteer in Australia and what works best with regard to encouraging volunteering amongst 16-24 year olds.

Most Australians would support a call for more young people, and indeed people of all ages, to get involved in their community through volunteering. And there are many initiatives in Victoria and across the country that are aimed at doing just that. Where Young Labor miss the mark is in their call for the scheme to be compulsory. Community service and volunteering is most successful and best achieved when it is exactly that – voluntary!

In 2004 the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, in partnership with the Victorian Office for Youth, published a series of three booklets aimed at encouraging youth participation and community involvement. Through our extensive research for these booklets we spoke to many young people and service providers about what enables volunteering and

what ensures its ongoing success.

Young people spoke of the importance of their ability to identify organisations and causes that were significant to them and to volunteer for services that they believed in. Some were motivated to volunteer for career progression and work experience, others to meet new friends. All indicated that the most successful and enjoyable experiences they had were where the work was meaningful, valued and acknowledged.

Services we spoke to talked of the importance of being prepared and ready for their young volunteers, to understand their motivations for volunteering and to find the best fit for them within their service. Many spoke of the steep learning curve they had experienced in welcoming young volunteers into their organisations and the responsibility that came with it. They spoke of their need for information and support to ensure a positive experience for both organisation and volunteer.

A proposal to thrust thousands of unprepared and perhaps unwilling volunteers on unsuspecting organisations in the name of compulsory community service is ill conceived and would ultimately fail. Regardless of age, from an agency's perspective an unwilling volunteer is worse than no volunteer at all.

Young Labor's call also neglects a number of important trends in Australia that are worth noting here. In comparison to several other countries including the UK, volunteering in Australia is on the increase. A 2004 report card on volunteering produced by Volunteering Australia showed that volunteer participation rates in Canada and the Netherlands are declining. In contrast 10.4 % more Australians were volunteers in 2002 than in 1995. While these ABS figures represent the population over the age of 18 other sources indicate young people are also active volunteers.

ABS data from 1996 shows that 11% of 15-24 year olds were volunteers compared with 27% of 35-44 year olds. While this figure might seem low, we need to understand that young people often face significant barriers to

volunteering. These barriers include lack of transport, the need to focus on paid employment and education and simply not knowing where to go to access information about volunteering.

Several studies have also shown that young people, when asked to self identify their volunteer activities fail to place many of their day to day activities in a volunteering category. In other words there may be significant under-reporting of the voluntary work carried out by young people across Australia on a daily basis.

Young Labor also fail to recognise the many schemes and initiatives already in place to support young people's community involvement. Here in Victoria we have the Advance program, co-ordinated by the Office for Youth. Last year Advance saw over 10,000 school aged young people participate in community services and organisations, with 333 schools involved.

In April of this year the Inspire Foundation will launch "Act Now", a website aimed at helping young people take action on social issues that affect them and their community. There are many other examples of such work.

Instead of calls for a compulsory scheme aimed at imposing community service on young people and services, how about a national strategy to encourage and support volunteering and community participation for all? A strategy that demonstrates the importance and value of volunteering, a strategy that helps young people identify organisations they would like to volunteer in, a strategy that assists organisations to work meaningfully with young volunteers and above all a strategy that asserts the importance of the voluntary nature of voluntary work.



CALL FOR ADDITIONAL YOUNG VIYAC VOLUNTEER REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES.

If you are a young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Victorian between 12-25 years and passionate about working with other Indigenous young people on issues that are important to you - then why not join the VIYAC, and have your say.

Council representatives are dedicated to creating change to improve the life of Indigenous youth across Victoria. As a member you will be a voice for Indigenous youth in their community, attend VIYAC meetings where possible and be a point of contact for the State Coordinator. VIYAC aims to have young representatives from across Victoria.

If you think you may be interested please contact Jade Colgan, VIYAC State Coordinator on (03) 9267 3788, fax (03) 9639 1622 or email viyac@yacvic.org.au

VICTORIAN INDIGENOUS YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

VIYAC MEETS WITH THE HONORABLE MR. GAVIN JENNINGS, MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS.

On the 15th of December, the Coordinator and representatives of VIYAC met with the Honorable Mr. Gavin Jennings, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The meeting was very successful with Mr. Jennings indicating that he was impressed with the work VIYAC has achieved to date. He agreed that VIYAC is a much-needed program for Victoria and indicated his personal support for the Committee. Mr Jennings was also very interested in exploring one issue in particular raised by VIYAC – a lack of respect and a breakdown of the relationship between Elders and youth in the Indigenous community. It was noted by some of the VIYAC representatives on the day that this issue in their eyes, is central to other issues affecting the Indigenous community. Mr. Jennings was very inter-

ested in exploring the possibility of future discussions between VIYAC representatives, Elders and the Government, on this issue.

The VIYAC Representatives were also able to report to the Minister the key issues that had been identified for each of the VIYAC Regions and some of their thoughts on valuable strategies and programs for young people, such as providing mentoring opportunities. The meeting was the first of quarterly meetings with Minister Jennings, providing an opportunity for the VIYAC to feed their perspectives directly to the Minister.

VIYAC is looking forward to the year ahead and continuing to work closely with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, the Office for Youth and YACVic.

Jade Colgan, VIYAC State Coordinator on (03) 9267 3788

YRG - YACVic's Youth Reference Group

It's been one chunk of a meeting at our last Youth Reference Group. In fact, it's even chunkier than any canned soup that Campbell's has ever made. As jam-packed as it was, we made it through our agenda in one piece and on time. Great performance guys and girls!

A whole lot of YRGers came un-expectedly, that was good as the week started with attendance looking on the grim side. As with all YacVic stuff, things turn out okay after all. In fact, it looks like our "little family" has more than truly blossomed with everyone chit-chatting during the introductory activity. It was nice to see relationships between us cementing and setting.

Early during our meeting, Jen briefly dropped by to explain us how YacVic will be producing an informative guide to voting in the state elections, to be designed by young people for young people. As part of that project, the YRG has deter-

mined a number of key areas that we may need to focus on more than other issues, bearing in mind all issues are important. Some of these were: housing/homelessness; mental health; Indigenous young people; culturally and linguistically diverse young people; juvenile justice; public space; income support, and young people and poverty.

Also on the list of things that we exchanged saliva over was working groups. Working groups are mini-committees about issues and projects that the YRG will have a direct involvement with. Our working groups have been highlighted and we will be expecting a frenzy of e-mail exchanges over the coming weeks.

Among the Everest of issues to discuss, one that was ultra-important was the Advocacy Expo. The general principle of this expo is to allow for young people to share ideas about advocacy and the

benefits that come along with it. The 2005 YRG wanted to complete this project but time and financial resources ran short last year. So donate to us! We want your money...and your babies. No, we take back the baby section as we don't have the space for crèche at our office...but I'm sure our fellow YRGers wouldn't mind babysitting at an event near you!

Other housekeeping items took place and before we knew it, another wonderful and rewarding two hours had passed in our lives. I'm sure we will meet again; otherwise, I'd be "nudging" you on MSN non-stop to find out where you are.

But on a more serious note, we would like to thank our supporters and backers of YacVic for the existence of the YRG, and more importantly, the support of YacVic staff especially Larissa and her team. We greatly appreciate the time and effort you put into us.

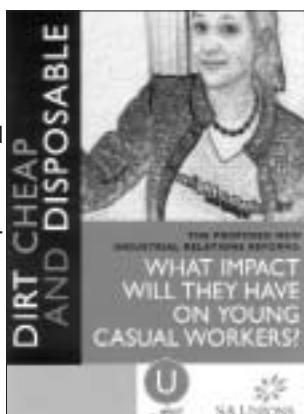
Dirt Cheap and Disposable

The U-Who Young People and Unions Network, an initiative of the SA Unions, have launched a report highlighting the exploitation of young workers.

With 800 surveys collected the Network found that many young people have little to no bargaining power in the workplace due to lack of workplace experience, their age, limited skills and low confidence. It also showed significant numbers are experiencing discrimination, harassment and bullying.

Safety at Work was found to be a big issue. It backs up previous research¹ that young people are injured more than any other age group. 35% of all respondents had been injured at work and a massive 49% of all male respondents had been injured.

Casual work was another area where young people were highly vulnerable. Of the survey respondents, 1 in 2 were casual workers; 30% had been pressured to work overtime without pay; 36% had been pressured to work while sick;



43% forced to work through a meal break; 55% were unaware of the award they were paid under; and 35.5% felt they had been paid less than the award rate. The statistics indicate that with no job security attached to their employment status, young people are more likely to tolerate poor working conditions and less likely to speak up about workplace issues due to fear of job loss.

Young people compared to the rest of the population are less likely to report workplace concerns, as they do not want to be perceived as 'dobbers', are reluctant to admit there is a problem and they require assistance, and fear of losing their job or creating further trouble stops them from reporting issues.

Young workers are already disadvantaged in our current system as these statistics suggest, how will the new Industrial Relations Reforms impact on them?

For more information and copies of the report *Dirt Cheap and Disposable* contact SA Unions on 08 8279 2222 or email saunions@saunions.org.au

¹ Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit, *Half the Age, Twice the Risk—Occupational Injury in School Age Children*, 2004.

National Youth Survey 2005

Mission Australia reports that suicide and self harm, physical and sexual abuse, and family conflict are issues of growing concern. This emerges from their *'National Youth Survey 2005: Key and emerging issues'*, released in December 2005. In this annual survey of Australian youth, about 11,300 young people aged 11 to 24 (94% of them being aged between 11 and 19) were surveyed. Two in five young participants were significantly concerned about suicide, and one in three about depression. Last year's top three issues (alcohol and other drugs, bullying and emotional abuse, and coping with stress) all declined in rank as matters of concern.

The survey, which was conducted online, through schools and colleges and with assistance of community organisations, government agencies and corporate part-

ners, also asked what young people valued, where they turn for advice and support, and what people and organisations they most admired.

Mission Australia's spokesperson, Anne Hampshire, said the increase in young people's concern about suicide and self harm, abuse and family conflict was troubling: *'young people are contemplating some very serious issues at an early age'* but added, *'it's encouraging that they're not afraid to talk about (these issues) with someone that's close—either their friends, family or another relative—and that's positive. We need to continue empowering young people—and their friends and families—so they have the information they need.'*

The full text of the survey report is online at www.missionaustralia.com.au/ and navigate to media releases.

New Funding Opportunities Available for Young Australians

New funding opportunities have now opened at The Foundation for Young Australians aimed at supporting and developing the ideas, skills and communities of young Australians, aged 12-25.

THE SPARK FUND

The Spark Fund is a new initiative that will financially support a young person or group of young people all aged 12-25 years, to 'Ignite an Innovative Idea' which makes a positive contribution to the community and enhances their skills and experiences.

INDIGENOUS SMALL GRANTS

Indigenous Small Grants provide funding to Indigenous organisations and organisations that work with Indigenous young people and communities to develop new initiatives as well as the expansion of existing successful initiatives.

THE ROBERT RILEY SCHOLARSHIP

The Robert Riley Scholarship supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in pursuit of studies in the fields of law, legal practice, human rights, child protection, criminology and criminal or juvenile justice.

THE INDIGENOUS YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

The Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, provides scholarships and leadership opportunities for young Indigenous Australians, generally from remote areas, studying at a tertiary level.

For further information on each funding opportunity, as well as application forms and guidelines, log on to www.youngaustralians.org or contact The Foundation for Young Australians on (03) 9670 5436.

Policy Update

Below is an update of some of the latest happenings in the area of policy in youth affairs.

NEW STATE GOVERNMENT YOUTH POLICY FOR VICTORIA

The State Government is developing a refreshed new Youth Policy for Victoria. The Office for Youth have released two surveys to capture feedback about proposed directions for the new agenda. Discussion forums are also being conducted throughout February, utilising the Regional Youth Affairs Networks, the Youth Affairs Council, the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council and the Municipal Association of Victoria. (See Forum Calendar on page 10)

The Office for Youth is proposing a youth policy direction that aims to ensure the following things are in place:

- Ways of working with young people so that practical support and ideas are developed or improved.
- Better understanding and acknowledgement of young people's experiences, views and the opportunity for their ideas to be shared.
- Having clear directions about what is needed and how it will be provided.

A survey designed for young people's input can be found on the youthcentral website at www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au.

For youth service providers, parents and anyone else interested in having their say, a survey can be found on the Office for Youth homepage at www.youth.vic.gov.au

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

The Working with Children Act 2005, establishes a new compulsory check system for people working or volunteering with children. The new system will be phased in over the next five years, beginning mid way through this year. The check system will take into consideration inappropriate criminal and professional disciplinary records to determine the appropriateness of someone to work in child related work. Some people are exempt from the check process, including people under the age of 18 and parents volunteering in an activity in which their child ordinarily participates.

Recently new information about the Working with Children Check has been released including draft regulations to implement the Act and a Regulatory Impact Statement conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers for the Department of Justice. Amongst the proposed regulations are details around the administrative process of applying for a check, the costs of the check at \$70

(volunteers are exempt from the charge) and what the check card will look like.

Both the draft regulations and the Regulatory Impact Statement can be downloaded from www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren

PROPOSAL FOR A CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Human Rights Consultation Committee have released their report *Rights, Responsibilities and Respect*, recommending that a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities be introduced in Victoria. The Committee recommends that the charter be implemented through an ordinary Act of Parliament and that it protect civil and political rights as contained in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966*. The Charter would protect the rights of all people in Victoria. (See the lead article of this edition of YIKES! for more details.)

The report of the Committee can be found at www.justice.vic.gov.au/human-rights

Jen Rose, YACVic's Policy Officer can be contacted on 9267 3799 or by email jrose@yacvic.org.au

Report on Bullying

Non-violent discipline – the link to reduce bullying?

A new study released by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics has found that using non-punitive forms of discipline in the home may be the key to reducing violence and bullying in schools.

The findings highlight personal and family factors, rather than the school environment, as major determinants in student-instigated assaults in schools. The study also revealed that student violence is more likely to occur in

schools where teachers have less than five years experience.

The study, *'School Violence and its Antecedents: Interviews with High School Students'*, was commissioned following a NSW Government forum on school safety in 2002. Forum participants included representatives from education, police, the NSW Commission for Children and Young People and from a range of other interested organisations and individuals.

The full report can be downloaded from the Bureau of Crime Statistics web site

<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocsar>



State Government Youth Policy Forums

The State Government is running a series of forums around Victoria in February with the aim of updating its current Victorian Youth Policy. Young people and the general public are invited to attend.

A full list of discussion forum dates and details is available from the Office for Youth website: www.youth.vic.gov.au

To register your attendance at any of the forums please complete the online registration form available at: www.youth.vic.gov.au

If you are unable to attend you can also have your say online at www.youth.vic.gov.au/youthconsultation. For more information regarding the online consultation and the discussion forums, please call

Kim Wilson at the Office for Youth on 03 9208 3203.

Below are the contacts for the various regions. For further info around these consultations see page 11 in the State Government News.

FEBRUARY

Mon	6	Tues	7	Wed	8	Thurs	9	Fri	10	Sat	11	Sun	12
		12.30 - 3.30pm WANGARATTA (NE RYAN) Sheree Brown, YLO (03) 5761 2187		10am - 1.30pm SHEPPARTON (Goulburn RYAN) Sheree Brown, YLO (03) 5761 2187				12.30 - 3.30pm BENDIGO and MILDURA (Loddon Campaspe & Mallee RYANs) MINISTER ALLEN TO ATTEND Brett Flavell, YLO (03) 5443 2533 To be linked by video conference					
	13		14	10am-1pm Municipal Association Victoria MELBOURNE Anne Tok, Communications (03) 9667 5543	15	11am-2.30pm SALE (Wellington East RYAN) Leanne Vella, YLO (03) 5174 7308	16	2-4pm Statewide – YACVic MELBOURNE YACVic Georgie Ferrari, EO (03) 9267 3799	17	MP forum in OAKLEIGH MINISTER ALLEN TO FACILITATE	18		
	20	9.30am - 12.30pm SPRINGVALE South Metro RYAN Kim Wilson (03) 9208 3203	21	VIYAC meeting MELBOURNE VIYAC Jade Colgan (03) 9267 3788	22	Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues MELBOURNE Alison Coehlo (03) 9349 3466	23	9.30-12.30pm Venue TBC Barwon RYAN Danielle Kent, YLO (03) 5215 6080	24	1-3pm YACVic – Youth Reference Group MELBOURNE YACVic Georgie Ferrari, EO (03) 9267 3799	25		
		12.30 - 3.30pm BALLARAT Central Highlands RYAN Marg Bolton, YLO (03) 5320 5922		10.30am Community Cabinet NILLUMBIK MINISTER TO FACILITATE Kirsty Leong, YLO (03) 9208 3202		10.30am - 1.30pm LEONGATHA Central Gipps RYAN Leanne Vella, YLO (03) 5174 7308		10.00am - 1.00pm IVANHOE Northern Metro RYAN Kirsty Leong, YLO (03) 9208 3202					
				2-3pm DHS Officers Youth Forum MELBOURNE				9.30am - 12.30pm GEELONG Barwon RYAN Danielle Kent, YLO (03) 5215 6080					
	27	9.30am - 12.30pm MOONEE PONDS Western Metro RYAN Kirsty Leong, YLO (03) 9208 3202	28	29	30	31							

State Government News

HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT A NEW YOUTH POLICY. BE IN THE DRAW FOR AN XBOX 360

Young people aged 12-25 years who have their say on an updated youth policy for the State Government could win an Xbox 360. To make sure the new policy reflects the needs of all Victoria's young people, the Office for Youth is asking young people to help shape a refreshed youth policy by answering an online questionnaire. The questionnaire can be found on www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/youthconsultation until the end of February 2006. Young people can also enter a competition to name the new policy and be in the running to win an Xbox 360. If you would like to get even more involved and talk about it face-to-face, you are invited to attend a discussion forum near you. These forums will be held across the state in February. See calendar on opposite page.

YACVic will be hosting its own discussion forum at the Melbourne Town Hall on Thursday 16 February. As well a forum specifically for young people, to be held in central Melbourne on Feb 25th, 1 will 3pm. For more details on ways to be involved in the consultations contact YACVic on (03) 9267 3799 or visit the web www.yacvic.org.au.

A full list of discussion forum dates is available from the Office for Youth website www.youth.vic.gov.au. To register your attendance at any of the forums please complete the online registration form available at: www.youth.vic.gov.au. For adults (over 25) you can also have your say online at www.youth.vic.gov.au/youthconsultation or register your interest in attending one of the discussion forums. For more information regarding the online consultation and the discussion forums, please call Kim Wilson at the Office for Youth on 03 9208 3203.

PUSH OVER 2006

Tickets for PUSH OVER 2006 are now on sale. This all-ages event hits Luna Park, St Kilda on Labour Day holiday, Monday 13 March from 10.30am - 9pm. Push Over is a no passouts, all-ages, fully supervised, drug, alcohol and smoke-free

event that is supported by Triple J, FReeZA and FReeZACentral.

Featuring some of the most exciting bands on the Australian music scene, PUSH OVER 2006 presents all-ages favourites Grinspoon, Frenzal Rhomb, The Hot Lies, Butterfingers, Parkway Drive, The Getaway Plan and The Gingers. The day also includes the FReeZA Push Start Grand Final with Sons of Messengers, Newskin, Lamort, Crimson Flames, Know Such Luck, Taboo and Paperhouse plus others competing for the top spot. Tickets are \$45, plus booking fee, and are on sale through Ticketek 132 849, online at www.ticketek.com.au and www.grinspoon.com.au and through Missing Link on 9670 8208. Tickets will also be available at the door for \$50 unless sold out.

NEW TOBACCO LAWS FOR UNDER-AGE MUSIC/DANCE EVENTS

From 1 March 2006 new laws will prohibit the following at underage 'music/dance' events:

- smoking
- the display of tobacco products
- the sale of tobacco products

An underage 'music/dance' event is an event that:

- involves the provision of music (live or recorded and for listening to or dancing to or both)
- is predominantly organised or intended for, or predominantly attended by persons under the age of 18 years
- is open to members of the public (with or without payment)
- takes place in any area or premises other than a private residence

If smoking occurs during the event, penalties apply to both individuals (over 18 years) who smoke and to the event organiser. Event organisers are also liable to receive a penalty if No Smoking signs are not displayed and if cigarettes are sold or displayed at the event.

NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK 2006

National Youth Week 2006, April 1-9, is

the Australia's largest celebration for young people. This year the theme for the Week is 'Just Add You' and young people are encouraged to get out and get involved at some of the fantastic events being planned around the state. In partnership with VicHealth, the State Government is providing more than \$150,000 in grants to 64 community organisations, including local government, youth groups and clubs. These groups will work with young people to deliver National Youth Week events across Victoria. You can find out more about events being planned in your local community by visiting www.youth.vic.gov.au from late February. More information on National Youth Week is on www.youth-week.com

2006 FREEZA GRANTS ANNOUNCED

Funding for the 2006 FReeZA program has been announced, with local government and not-for-profit organisations sharing in a \$2 million fund to run the highly successful FReeZA program. The grants will continue to encourage young people, particularly in regional areas, to attend and perform at safe music events. For a list of 2006 FReeZA Providers visit the FReeZA website: www.freeza.vic.gov.au

THE MELBOURNE 2006 COMMONWEALTH GAMES COME TO YOUTHCENTRAL

The Commonwealth Games are being held from March 15 - 26 and youthcentral at www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au is going all out to provide you with up-to-date information. The youthcentral team will be redesigning the homepage with a fresh Commonwealth Games 'look'. Some of the features include information about the Queen's Baton Relay; an events calendar and articles about the Commonwealth Games cultural and youth festivals; podcasts; a funky game and a link to the official site of the Melbourne Commonwealth Games so you can keep up with daily results and news. All this will be in addition to the huge range of information available on youthcentral about jobs and careers, local services and events, study, travel, money and more.

Up Coming

CONFERENCES

The Great Australian Dream?

Waking up to homelessness.

The Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations has announced the 4th National Homelessness Conference.

Where: Sydney Convention Centre

When: 1-3 March 2006

The 4th National Homelessness Conference will focus on continued development of a strategic response to homelessness in Australia. The themes will include: addressing structural causes of homelessness; promoting strengths; sharing good ideas; removing barriers to better outcomes for homeless Australians; Australian homelessness in 2015?; future policy and service responses to homelessness.

The conference will be of interest to and inclusive of people who have experienced homelessness; homelessness assistance service workers, managers and board members; community sector agencies; government policy makers; researchers, and corporations and foundations who provide funding and assistance to the homelessness service system.

For further info visit the conference website www.afho.org.au/conference

CALL FOR CONFERENCE PAPERS

Young People's Health - What's it going to take?

Youth Health 2006, the 5th Australian and New Zealand Adolescent Health Conference is calling for papers.

Where: Sydney

When: 13-15 November 2006

The conference will be hosted by the Department of Adolescent Medicine and the NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health, The Children's Hospital at Westmead with the support of other centres and organisations in Australia and New Zealand who work towards adolescent well-being.

For more info contact Sharyn Low (02) 4572 3079, email sharyn@mob.com.au, visit website www.youthhealth2006.org

YOUNG PEOPLES' SUMMIT

Brightest Young Minds

Young Australians will be given the opportunity to attend a summit for the 100 brightest and most dynamic minds in the country when the prestigious Brightest Young Minds (BYM) summit is staged in Australia.

Where: Sydney

When: 2-9 July 2006

The BYM Foundation aims to inspire the next generation of Australian leaders to have greater social responsibility and foster a professional ethos that involves contributing to the common good. The summit creates a platform for delegates to brainstorm solutions to a range of social issues facing the country's current and next generations. It will provide a bridge between those youth that have the passion and drive to make an impact on social problems, and Australia's socially responsible corporate citizens who are on the lookout to offer support for dynamic new projects.

Entries will be accepted from any Australian aged between 20-25 years and those chosen will be flown to Sydney to attend the intensive week-long event.

For more information on BYM and the summit, see: <http://www.bym.com.au>

STUDY

PHD Student Requires Help from Young People In Study on Adolescent Thinking

Getting along with others is important, but can be very difficult at times. This is particularly true during the adolescent years. It's during this time we gain the social confidence we carry with us during our early adult years. This project is trying to find out two things: how male adolescents get along with others their own age and how they think when they are interacting with others their own age.

The study consists of a series of short video taped social situations looking at a range of interactions, such as making jokes, offering help with something, or

yelling and hitting when frustrated.

If you're interested in participating, please call Julian Dooley at the University of Melbourne on phone 8344 9892 for more details.

REPORT RELEASE

Children In Care Health Report Card

Released January 30, 2006, the Health Report Card published by the Create foundation provides a comparative snapshot of the health of children and young people in care across Australia.

Incorporating information from each State and Territory department, and informed by the views of 281 young people in care, the Report Card highlights current health issues for those in care.

Key findings included:

Children unable to identify their case worker: Nearly 20% participating in the Report Card could not identify a case worker assigned to their case.

No identified case plan: Over half of the young people interviewed did not have a case plan, or were not made aware of the plan.

Poor dental health: Over 80% of those interviewed indicated that they required dental care. Of those in need of dental care, only one third could identify that processes had been put in place to meet their dental needs.

Higher medical needs: The results of this Report Card suggest that those in care have a higher incidence of conditions that affect their mental and physical health.

A full copy of the report is available from www.create.org.au