

National Youth Affairs Conference International Keynote Speaker Confirmed



Professor Howard Williamson

YACVic is delighted to have secured Professor Howard Williamson as our international keynote speaker for the 2007 National Youth Affairs Conference *Are We There Yet? past learnings, current realities, future directions for youth affairs in Australia*

Howard Williamson

is Professor of European Youth Policy in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Glamorgan, Wales. He was previously Lecturer in Social Policy and Senior Research Associate in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. He is also a part-time youth worker at St Francis Youth and Community Centre, Bournville, Birmingham, where he was the Senior Youth Worker from 1985-2003 (and a voluntary youth worker from 1979 to 1985). It is Howard's dual roles of both academic and youth worker that sparked our interest in him for the conference.

Between August 2001 and February 2002, Howard was guest professor in the Institute for Psychology at the University of Copenhagen. He is also a guest lecturer at a number of other European education and training institutions, and Visiting Professor in the Centre for Community Research at the University of Hertfordshire. He was appointed CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in the New Year's Honours List 2002, for services to young people.

Howard has managed and conducted research projects for local, national and European organisations. His research work has been predominantly on youth issues, notably concerning youth work and youth training, but it has also addressed juvenile justice and youth crime, drug misuse, special needs housing, inter-agency partnerships, mini-enterprise in schools, local economic development and training for enterprise in Europe.

Howard's primary research interests are around youth policy, citizenship and social exclusion, and the role of youth work in the personal development and social integration of young people. He has published well over a hundred papers on these issues and has spoken at numerous national and international conferences

Howard's current research interests include:

- ♦ Young people and citizenship.
- ♦ Theoretical questions about the nature of exclusion and inclusion.
- ♦ Policy-oriented interest in risk and protective factors, and in programmes which address risk and engender the possibility of more effective transition routes to adulthood, notably through formal and informal education/learning.

YACVic is very excited to have Howard speaking at the *Are We There Yet?* Conference in May 2007. He plans to speak on themes such as exclusion and inclusion and 'opportunity-focused' policy. Howard is keen to offer his extensive knowledge regarding Sector Development and building a cohesive and united national framework for Youth Work and Youth Policy.

For more info on the conference see page 10.

This issue...

The December edition of YIKES! sees out the year with our front page introducing the keynote speaker, Howard Williamson, for next year's national conference. Jen Rose looks at the **Retaining Young People in Rural Communities** report and Anna Forsyth reports on **Creating Connections - Youth Homelessness Action Plan Stage 2**. We have our usual updates from the usual suspects YDAS, VIYAC, YACVic Policy Officer and the State news and there is a copy of our **Who's Carrying the Can?** report for your perusal. Of course there are other things too but you'll need to read them for yourselves!

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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 **20 January 2007**

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 info@yacvic.org.au.

Editorial

Festive greetings YACVic members! At the time of writing this we are one week out from knowing who will govern our state for the next three years. The election campaign has been an interesting one, with young people getting more than a passing mention on a number of occasions. Both the Labor and Liberal parties have recently launched their youth election policies, these are on their websites and worth a look. YACVic received a mention in both documents with each of the major parties promising to increase our core funding, which is great news for us and for the future of youth advocacy in Victoria!

The 2006 year has been an immensely busy one for YACVic. Among other things we have been working hard on organising the National Youth Affairs Conference, campaigning on an improved youth service system for Victoria and establishing the Youth Disability Advocacy Service. We've begun to work on a Code of Ethical Practice for the Youth Sector (more on this in the next issue of *YIKES!*) and have worked closely with the Office for Youth on a number of issues including strengthening the Regional Youth Affairs Networks and the development of *Future Directions*, the Victorian Youth Agenda.

On the home front we have been busy producing reports and other useful documents. Our election kit received a lot of positive feedback, as did the joint report we've published with VIYAC on the voices of Indigenous Youth in Victoria. Enclosed in this issue of *YIKES!* is the final report from our joint campaign with VCOSS - *Who's Carrying the Can?*. I hope you enjoy reading it and can use it to campaign further with us on increasing youth services in Victoria.

I'm off to Japan in early December for an invitational study tour on youth education and leadership. I look forward to reporting back on youth work in Japan in the next issue of *YIKES!*

A final round of thanks is due to you faithful YACVic members for your support throughout the year. It has been great working with you in 2006 and I look forward to more productive work in 2007. Best wishes for the festive season and happy holidays!



Georgie Ferrari, CEO
gferrari@yacvic.org.au

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

In the past few weeks YACVic staff have:

- ♦ Attended a consultation with Fitzroy Legal Service on Youth Homelessness
- ♦ Attended a meeting with Alun Hughes, Senior Policy Advisor, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, United Kingdom, hosted by the Office for Youth and the Office for Children.
- ♦ Attended the first meeting of the Juvenile Justice and Youth Services Advisory Group, convened by the Office for Children
- ♦ Attended an Adolescent Health Conference in Sydney
- ♦ Convened a meeting of the Youth Participation Workers Network
- ♦ Convened a meeting of the JPET Providers Network

- ♦ Attended the ALP youth policy launch

In the next few weeks we will:

- ♦ Meet with the Code of Ethical Practice working group
- ♦ Attend the RYAN convenors meeting
- ♦ Attend the VCOSS/Centrelink Issues Meeting
- ♦ Convene the Public Space Action Group
- ♦ Hold a Youth Reference Group meeting

If you are interested in knowing anything more about these or other meetings YACVic might attend, please contact Larissa Barrie on 9267 3799 or email info@yacvic.org.au

YACVIC BOARD APPOINTS A YOUNG PERSON TO CHAIR

The Board of Governance of YACVic recently elected a young person to the position of Chairperson for the first time in the organisation's history.

Jordina Rust, 19, a first year Arts/Law student at Melbourne University was unanimously elected to the position in what is an historic move for the Council.

YACVic has long been an advocate of youth participation and this move by the Board reflects our commitment to young people's participation in decision making processes in all levels of YACVic.

Jordina has been involved with YACVic for many years, first as a member of the Youth Reference Group then a Board member. Last year she served as Deputy Chair.

Jordina will lead a team of 10 Board members, including four other members under the age of 25.

"I am delighted to have been elected Chairperson of YACVic in what will be a very busy year for the Council, with the State election and the hosting a national youth affairs conference in May of next year".

Jordina performed her first public responsibility as Chairperson for the Council as host and MC at YACVic's Election Kit Launch and Candidates' Forum at Richmond Town Hall on October 25.

All YACVic Board meetings are open to members to attend. The next meeting is scheduled for 5.30 pm on December 14.



Jordina Rust, YACVic Chairperson

To register your interest in attending please call Larissa Barrie on 9267 3799 or email info@yacvic.org.au.

NEW ENERGY FOR YACVIC'S BOARD, PAG AND YRG

YACVic would like to extend a warm welcome to all members of the Board of Governance, Policy Advisory Group, and Youth Reference Group for the 2006/07 year.

OUR NEW BOARD

At YACVic's AGM on October 11th, YACVic members elected five new members to the Board of Governance. With four members continuing their tenure from 2005, the current Board members are:

Jordina Rust (Chairperson)
Peter Newling (Deputy Chair)
Toni Hancock (Treasurer, and Regional/Rural Representative)
Chris Varney (Young Media Spokesperson)
Noelle de Clifford
Richard Hill
Sankaran Kasynathan
Cheryl Naik
Michael Pountney

Each of the Board positions are appointed for a two year period, except for the Young Media Spokesperson, which is elected by the membership annually. Fifty percent of Board membership must be made up of young people aged 25 and under, and this year our young persons' positions have been filled by Jordina Rust, Chris Varney, Sankaran Kasynathan, Cheryl Naik, and Michael Pountney. YACVic would also like to welcome Richard Hill to the Board this year in a 'non-youth specific' position, joining Peter Newling, Toni Hancock, Noelle De Clifford who have all continued on the Board from 2005/06.

You'll be able to find out a bit more about each member of the Board on our website, at http://yacvic.org.au/pages/about_us/board.htm

OUR NEW YOUNG MEDIA SPOKESPERSON

Our new Young Media Spokesperson (YMS) for 2006/07 is Chris Varney, who has been a member of YACVic since 2003, and has also previously been on the Youth Reference Group. ...CONT P10

Youth Participation Award Winner – Dani Kline

YACVic would like to congratulate Dani Kline on recently winning the Young People's Participation Award in the Victorian Regional Achievement and Community Awards for 2006. This was an amazing achievement, and is a great recognition of Dani's extensive contribution to youth participation. Dani has been involved in a number of organisations and youth events both locally in her home town of Bendigo, as well as with YACVic, and she never hesitates to advocate for young people's voices being heard.

It was a great privilege to share in celebrating Dani's achievements, and YACVic is thrilled to be working with Dani on the Youth Reference Group again this year. Congratulations Dani!



Dani Kline, Winner of Young People's Participation Award

Keeping Young People in Rural Communities-

Following an eight month investigation, the Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee have released its report of the *Inquiry into Retaining Young People in Rural Towns and Communities*. The report documents the findings of the Inquiry on a range of issues impacting on the retention of young people in rural and regional communities and makes 56 recommendations 'on steps that might be taken to increase the number of young people who decide to remain in or return to rural towns and communities.'¹

YACVic welcomes this important report, which explores in depth:

- ♦ the factors that influence young people in deciding to remain in or leave the rural communities in which they reside, and
- ♦ the factors that influence young people in deciding whether or not to return to the rural communities in which they have previously resided following the completion of study, travel or other fixed or short term activities in other places.

The Inquiry received 97 submissions from a range of organisations and individuals from across the state and has drawn from and presented the stories of individual young people in case studies, which appear throughout the report. The inquiry also conducted a large number of public hearings in various locations around the state through April and May. Georgie Ferrari, CEO of YACVic, presented at the Melbourne hearings, sharing YACVic's learnings from our rural and regional members and from the development of the YACVic report *The Rural Life of Us: A report on young people and workers with young people in Victoria* and the YACVic/VCOSS report *Who's Carrying the Can? Youth Support Services: A report into youth service gaps in Victoria*.

The inquiry found that despite the fact that 'a large proportion of rural young Victorians wish to remain in a rural community'², the key reasons why young people leave their communities are 'to gain access to education and training, employment, or to experience urban and /or international lifestyles.'³

Other key findings related to:

- ♦ young people's representation and opportunities to develop leadership skills
- ♦ young people's experiences of discrimination and the need to support diversity
- ♦ improving educational and employment outcomes for young people
- ♦ access to public transport
- ♦ the availability of affordable housing to young people
- ♦ the value of expanding the collection of outcome-related information for rural students within the 'On Track' annual student survey
- ♦ measures to improve young people's access to services including incentives to attract health, education and community service professionals to rural towns

In a statement made at the public hearings, Georgie Ferrari relayed that many young people had reported experiences of discrimination in small town settings:

*"Many young people we have talked to cite discrimination, either in overt or subtle forms, as a reason for them to leave and not return to rural and regional areas....Same sex attracted young people often talk of their struggles to 'come out' or even accept in themselves their sexuality in conservative small towns."*⁴

Examples of discrimination such as this prompted the Inquiry to recommend that 'the State Government provides funding to expand the coverage of rural and regional programs aimed to address issues of discrimination and intolerance against people on the basis of race, gender, cultural differences or sexual practice.'⁵

The report also highlighted the need to improve young people's access to services in rural and regional Victoria and some of the specific challenges in delivering services in these areas, such as the higher costs of service delivery in geographically isolated areas and the difficulties in attracting and retaining health, education and community service professionals to rural areas.⁶

Recommendation 8 requests that the 'State Government address funding for youth-oriented services in rural areas, through a model which reflects the higher costs of service delivery of youth programs in areas of low population density, with a view to ensuring continuity of service supply.'⁷ This recommendation complements the findings of the recently released YACVic/VCOSS report *Youth Service Gaps: Who's Carrying the Can?* which reported specific challenges in delivering services in rural and regional Victoria such as gaps in generalist youth support and counselling services, a lack of service infrastructure, a paucity of referral options for youth workers and difficulties for young people in accessing services confidentially in small towns.

In response to the problem of generalist youth support service gaps across Victoria, YACVic and VCOSS recommended the need for a locally based, integrated and comprehensive youth services system in Victoria, that is structured along a prevention - early intervention - secondary - tertiary service continuum. Investment in such a locally based service system would go far to meet the needs of rural and regional communities in improving young people's access to services.⁸

The Inquiry also recommends the development of 'hubs of health and community services with the objective of enhancing service offerings, lowering the costs of provision and increasing user anonymity in order to encourage young people to access services that are appropriate to them. Again, this recommendation complements the findings of *Who's Carrying the Can?* which reported a youth service provider in rural Victoria describing the difficulties experienced by young people wanting to access health care:

"Young people have a lot of hurdles to jump in country areas (eg medical receptionists who know their family, being known at the local chemist) to access health services. Privacy is a real concern

for many young people who want to access health services.⁹

The central importance of effective public transport networks in enabling young people to access services, employment and educational opportunities and recreational opportunities is recognised by the Inquiry, which recommends that the 'State Government continue its commitment to improving public transport services and service interconnectivity in rural areas...'¹⁰ YACVic had placed a strong emphasis on the need for improved public transport services in their representation to the Inquiry during the public hearings, again drawing from the evidence collected to inform the 'Who's Carrying the Can?' report, such as this quote provided by a youth service provider in Wangaratta:

"A 14-year-old drove himself to an appointment (in another town 45 kilometres away) the other day because he didn't want to get into trouble missing it and his family let him down."¹¹

Access to affordable housing is a challenge for many young people across Victoria, which young people making up approximately 35% of the homeless population in Victoria according to 2001 census data.¹² Typically in rural and regional communities, the housing and rental market can be even more difficult for young people to access. For this reason, the Inquiry has recommended that 'the State Government undertake a detailed assessment of the private rental accommodation market for rural young people as a matter of priority to determine what action, if any, should be taken to address concerns regarding housing availability for rural young people.' YACVic recommends that the Council to Homeless Persons be closely consulted in the development and undertaking of any such assessment or actions.

Importantly, the report also notes that there are specific issues that impact on young people from rural and regional Victoria accessing tertiary educational opportunities. The Inquiry indicates support of the 'On Track' survey which collects data on employment or study outcomes during the first year out of school for young people leaving school in years 10-12. However 'the Committee observes that deferral of study or training in the first year after graduation from high school can mean that the data collected via the On Track survey may not be completely accurate or meaningful.¹³ To this end, the Inquiry recommends that the collection of 'On-Track' data be expanded by the State Government for a further three years after graduation 'to enhance the relevance of this program for supporting the transition of rural students into study, training or employment.'¹⁴

This recommendation is in line with concerns raised by many of the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) based in rural and regional Victoria, that report higher than state average levels of deferral of higher education, with many young people not re-engaging into study. This is understood to be a key factor to consider in assisting young people's transitions into study, training or employment.

In response to this important issue, preliminary discussions have been had between several of the rural and regional LLEN's, a representative from the Dept of Education and Training, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and the University of Melbourne,

to explore the possibilities for research that would expand the collection of 'On Track' data. This research would provide insights into levels of deferral in rural and regional areas, the reasons behind it, and the ways in which young people can be supported to take up their places in higher education.

YACVic has written to the Chairperson of the Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, Mr Ben Hardman, MP, to express our support for the findings of the report and our particular interest in the recommendations explored in this article. YACVic will be following up with the new Minister for Youth Affairs and other relevant Ministers to monitor the progress of the recommendations made by the Inquiry.

The *Inquiry into Retaining Young People in Rural Towns and Communities Final report* can be downloaded from <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/rdsdc/inquiries/YoungPeople/RetainingYoungPeopleReportFinal.pdf>

The *Who's Carrying the Can? Youth Support Services: A report into youth service gaps in Victoria* can be downloaded from the YACVic website on http://www.yacvic.org.au/includes/pdfs_wordfiles/whoscarryingthecanreport.pdf

Report by Jen Rose, YACVic Policy Officer.

¹ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee. *Inquiry into Retaining Young people in Rural Towns and communities Final report*. Parliament of Victoria. September 2006. See 'Terms of reference of the inquiry', p.iii

² Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), see *Finding 4*. p. 52.

³ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), see *Finding 3*. p. 51.

⁴ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), p.107.

⁵ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), See *Recommendation 7*. p.xv.

⁶ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), See *Recommendations 8 and 49*.

⁷ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), See *Recommendation 8*. p.111.

⁸ Youth Affairs Council and Victorian Council of Social Service. (2006). *Who's Carrying the Can? A report into youth services gaps in Victoria*. See *Recommendation 1 (a)*. p.26.

⁹ Youth Affairs Council and Victorian Council of Social Service. (2006). *Who's Carrying the Can? A report into youth services gaps in Victoria*. p.19.

¹⁰ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), See *Recommendation 14*. p.143.

¹¹ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), p.135.

¹² Council to Homeless Persons. *Contextualising Young People. Implications for young people experiencing homelessness*. Accessed from www.chp.org.au 20/11/06

¹³ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), p.193.

¹⁴ Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, (2006), See *Recommendation 32*. p.194.

SUPPORTING YOUNG HOMELESS PEOPLE THROUGH CREATING CONNECTIONS

Last month, Minister for Housing, Candy Broad, launched *Creating Connections - Youth Homelessness Action Plan Stage 2 (YHAP Stage 2)* which commits the Bracks Government to key reform priorities and actions over the next four years to 2010.

WHAT IS THE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN?

YHAP Stage 2 builds on the *Victorian Homelessness Strategy*, announced in 2002, and the *Youth Homelessness Action Plan Stage 1 (YHAP Stage 1)* which in 2004 identified priorities and actions for immediate implementation with a view to "...working towards a more integrated and holistic service response for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness."²

The main initiatives of the YHAP Stage 1 included:

- ♦ the *Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program (FRMP)* which provides brokerage funds to services and workers to assist young homeless people to access family mediation and reconciliation support;
- ♦ the *Youth Employment Education and Training Initiative (YEETI)* which offers brokerage funds to services and workers to facilitate young homeless people's engagement with employment, education and training;
- ♦ the *Youth Transitions Model (YTM)* which consists of low cost longer-term accommodation linked to intensive case-management and life skills training for young people committed to pursuing employment, education and training opportunities; and
- ♦ the *Young People Leaving Care - Housing and Support Initiatives* aimed at achieving better outcomes for young people leaving care through case-managed support with access to long-term housing, community supports, employment, education and training services as well as life skills training.

Building on these initial initiatives, the *YHAP Stage 2* provides a more comprehensive and longer-term framework for improving responses to young homeless Victorians. Its primary objective is to ensure that young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have the community connections and relationships with significant others as well as the skills to assist them to achieve greater independence and stable living arrangements.

WHO ARE YOUNG HOMELESS PEOPLE?

For the purpose of homelessness research, it is widely accepted that young people fall within the age range of 12-24 years.³ Sadly, the number of young homeless people in Australia continues to increase. The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics Census figures indicate that the number of young homeless people in Australia aged 12 to 18 escalated by 8.4 percent between 1994 and 2001.⁴

There is an approximate total of 36,173 young homeless Australians between the ages of 12 and 24 years.⁵ This equates

to 36% of the Australian homelessness population. Of this total, approximately 26,060 young homeless people are aged between 12 to 18.⁶

Young people have been shown to experience homelessness in different ways:⁷

- ♦ without accommodation - eg. streets, squats, cars, tents;
- ♦ in temporary accommodation - eg. with friends and relatives;
- ♦ in emergency accommodation - eg. refuge or crisis accommodation; and
- ♦ in longer-term supported accommodation - eg. transitional housing, youth housing programs.

Data suggests that most young people are living in temporary accommodation, such as with friends and family or in emergency or longer-term supported accommodation.⁸ Conversely, very few are without any form of accommodation, that is, "on the streets" or "sleeping rough".⁹ Research has also shown that young people generally experience a very transitory form of homelessness, moving between places of accommodation regularly and often only remaining in a state of homelessness for a brief period.¹⁰

HOW WILL THE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN STAGE 2 ASSIST YOUNG HOMELESS VICTORIANS?

The YHAP Stage 2 identifies four main areas for improvement in seeking to enhance the service system's long-term response to young people experiencing homelessness.¹¹ Each of these core areas has been informed by workers and young people in the sector as well as by current youth homelessness research.

A strong focus on early intervention and interdependence:

Major themes highlighted in a recent longitudinal study of young homeless people included:¹²

- ♦ young people's need to remain "interdependent" through the provision of continuity of care which promotes young people's sense of long-term connection with support services; and
- ♦ young people's general desire to feel a sense of "connectedness" with family, partners and significant others.

Acknowledging research such as this longitudinal study, the YHAP Stage 2 recognises the need and right of all young people, especially those experiencing homelessness, to rely on supportive community environments and structural assistance.

This "interdependence" provides young people with the support and relationships necessary to move towards a greater level of adult independence, providing time and space for young people to achieve the social and financial capabilities commensurate with their age and developmental stage.

Tailored accommodation and housing support options for each individual homeless young person:

A recent research project funded by the Council to Homeless Persons revealed that:¹³

- ♦ young homeless people are not a homogenous group - age, gender, cultural background, developmental stage, time and experience of homelessness, all affect what a young person needs and wants; and

- ♦ young people want more than accommodation - primarily they want a sense of belonging and recognition and to be respected and valued as individuals.

Underpinning the YHAP Stage 2 is an understanding that homeless young people come from a wide range of backgrounds and that their reasons for seeking assistance are varied. Whether from poor, economically stable or affluent families and whatever their reasons for homelessness, young people require an individualised response specific to their needs.

Greater access to complementary services for homeless young people with complex needs:

The YHAP Stage 2 commits to improving cross-government service delivery for young homeless people, particularly in the areas of education, housing, social work, health, income and employment. It recognises that upon presentation at a homelessness assistance service, young people generally have few supports to draw on. Moreover, those with more complex needs have often become disengaged with key services such as those providing mental health or drug and alcohol assistance. Accordingly, the YHAP Stage 2 prioritises reform aimed at a more holistic and coordinated service system.

Enhanced youth homelessness service capacity:

Importantly, the YHAP Stage 2 sets out a number of initiatives that will be important in ensuring a properly supported, skilled and efficient workforce into the future. These include the provision of improved professional development opportunities through education, training and best practice for homelessness assistance workers.

WHAT IS THE PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION?

Some key actions to be undertaken in order to give effect to the intent of the YHAP Stage 2 include:

The creation of youth transitions hubs:

Youth transitions hubs will provide a link for young homeless people between the support provided in crisis accommodation and more independent living arrangements. Each hub will vary depending on local need, opportunities and existing infrastructure but all will provide a more intensive support response to young homeless people. Although not necessarily co-located, each hub will offer a suite of services including life skills programs, links to employment, education and training services, access to specialist assistance and reconnection to community and significant others. Where possible, semi-independent living units will be available for young people accessing the hubs, backed by twenty-four hour crisis support.

A link to the private rental market:

A private rental program will be established to support young homeless people to find and maintain stable living arrangements by providing flexible brokerage packages and by collaboration between homelessness services, real estate agents and other specialist services where necessary.

Intensive case management program:

Aimed at assisting young homeless people with high and com-

plex needs, this program will provide funds to homelessness services to deliver intensive support packages with links to specialist youth health, welfare and justice services.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS?

Importantly, successful implementation of the YHAP Stage 2 will require these and other actions to be undertaken within an environment of practice reflection. The YHAP Stage 2 document provides an outstanding basis from which youth specific practice can be improved and strengthened. Moreover, the YHAP Stage 2 presents the youth homelessness sector with a potentially very powerful advocacy tool to build its profile and to achieve professional recognition. Perhaps most importantly however, the YHAP Stage 2 reflects a genuine commitment to address the specific needs of young people experiencing homelessness, such as those expressed by a young woman working with the Council to Homeless Persons:

"When you find yourself homeless as a young person, you are skeptical of anyone offering you support. However, when people truly care about you, they persevere and I was lucky enough to find myself surrounded by these kinds of people when I moved into a long-term youth hostel. This place backed me up, gave me the time and support to live my own life and to strive for my own dreams. And it wasn't just emotional support, it was basic stuff like learning how to cook, use a washing machine and managing a budget - important things you just can't be expected to know when you're that young."

With support like this, young people experiencing homelessness can be prevented from long-term social disconnection and adult homelessness. The Youth Homelessness Action Plan is a terrific start in achieving this end.

Report by Anna Forsyth, Youth Policy Officer, Council to Homeless Persons

- ¹ Edwards, J, Keys, D, Mallett, S & Rosenthal, D *Young People's True Stories: Getting Out*, p 35. The stories presented in this book come from Project i - a two year longitudinal study of young people in Melbourne who are experiencing homelessness.
- ² *Youth Homelessness Action Plan first stage report (2004)* Office of Housing, Department of Human Services, Melbourne, p 1.
- ³ Chamberlain, C & MacKenzie, D (2004) *Counting the Homeless 2001*, Swinburne University & RMIT University, Melbourne, p 25.
- ⁴ Chamberlain, C & MacKenzie, D (2002) *Youth Homelessness 2001*, RMIT University, Melbourne, p 32.
- ⁵ Chamberlain, C & MacKenzie, D (2004), op cit, p 7.
- ⁶ Chamberlain, C & MacKenzie, D (2002), op cit, p iv.
- ⁷ Chamberlain, C & MacKenzie, D (1995) House of Representatives Report on *Aspects of Youth Homelessness: A Summary and a Commentary*, RMIT University, Melbourne, p 15.
- ⁸ Chamberlain, C & MacKenzie, D (2002), op cit, p 18 & Mallett, S, Myers, P, Rosenthal, D & Rossiter, B *Living Well? Homeless young people in Melbourne* (2003), Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, p 8.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Mallett, S, Myers, P, Rosenthal, D & Rossiter, B (2003) op cit, p 9.
- ¹¹ *Creating Connections: Youth Homelessness Action Plan Stage 2: 2006-2010 (2006)* Office of Housing, Department of Human Services, Melbourne, pp 4 & 5.
- ¹² Keys, D, Mallett, S, Myers, P & Rosenthal, D (2006) *Moving Out Moving On: Young people's pathways in and through homelessness in Melbourne*, The Key Centre for Women's Health in Society, The University of Melbourne. Report prepared for Sector Housing Development, Housing and Homelessness, DHS.
- ¹³ Keys, D, Mallett, M & Marven, M (2005) *Making a Place to Belong*, University of Melbourne, p vi.

YDAS out and about

In partnership with Deaf Children Australia, Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS) presented a workshop on advocacy at the National Deaf Youth camp in Royal Park. Young deaf people from across the country participated in this event and learnt about leadership and advocacy.



Participants of the Disability Advocacy workshop.

The workshop focused on identifying the advocacy issues that were most important to deaf and hearing-impaired young people. Captioning (subtitling) of all television and movies was identified as a high priority for advocacy as was increasing the availability of AUSLAN interpreters in schools, universities and the general community. Participants were keen to advocate for the teaching of AUSLAN in schools and for there to be more community awareness about hearing impairment. We also had a lot of laughs with role plays demonstrating assertiveness and how to stand up for your rights. It was great to work with such an enthusiastic group of young people who were passionate about social justice and speaking out for the rights of deaf and hearing-impaired young people.

In other YDAS news, the YDAS website is now available. You can visit us at: <http://www.ydas.org> The website was designed to be accessible and interactive. It includes a forum where young people with disabilities can exchange information and support.

Your feedback and any suggestions for improvements are greatly appreciated. My e-mail is george@ydas.org and my phone number is 92673755. Our individual advocate, Michelle Bowler, can be emailed at michelle@ydas.org and her phone number is 92673733 or call toll-free on 1300727176

VIYAC Voices is here and the Yan Yean Gathering is close

'VIYAC VOICES: *Telling it Like it is: Young Aboriginal Victorians on Culture, Identity and Racism*', a joint research report of VIYAC and YACVic, was launched on 24th October at the Koorie Heritage Trust.

We are extremely excited about the release of this publication as it contains raw, honest and very real youth perspectives on three issues affecting Indigenous youth, those being culture, identity and racism. The VIYAC members specifically chose these issues to talk about, as they felt that they were extremely important in their lives and have seen the effects that sometimes occur in themselves and their peers when these issues aren't recognised and dealt with. The report brings together two forms of knowledge; the voices of Indigenous young people on some key issues they have identified and a summary of some stats and facts on Indigenous people and Indigenous young people from research bodies, government and community organisations. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Gavin Jennings, spoke at the launch, which was great. And so too did Belinda Jakiel from the National Indigenous Employment Program at AFL Sports Ready. Members of the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council also shared excerpts of young people's perspectives from the report on the night. It was a great success.

YAN YEAN UPCOMING FREE COMMUNITY EVENT

On a very exciting note VIYAC is hosting the Yan Yean Gathering: Celebrating our Culture - Creating Opportunities for the future. The Gathering is a day to celebrate and promote the young Indigenous talent in Victoria through dance, art, music, performance and much more. The Gathering will also include a 'job, service and education market' to show youth and families the opportunities, programs and services available to them. There will also be a free BBQ lunch, lots of giveaways and some exciting interactive activities to get involved in. It will be on Saturday December 2nd at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Corner Bell St and St Georges Rd, Preston from 10am-3pm.

VIYAC has also held another council meeting, which took place on October 29th. Six members attended and the day was used to plan the 'Yan Yean Gathering'. We urge you all to come along and join in the fun.

Jade Colgan, State Coordinator for VIYAC can be contacted on 9267 3788 or by email viyac@viyac.org.au.

LABOR RELEASES YOUTH ELECTION POLICY - CONNECT: NEW IDEAS FOR YOUNG VICTORIANS

On the 15th of November, the ALP launched their election youth policy *Connect: New ideas for young Victorians* outlining a range of actions and initiatives aimed at creating 'more opportunities so all young Victorians can reach their full potential.'

Some of the initiatives outlined in *Connect* were detailed in *Future Directions: an Action Agenda for Young Victorians* launched by the Government in August 2006. These include initiatives such as the establishment of 'Young People Direct', 'Student Voice' and a 'Youth Arts Reference Group' and the appointment of 24 new 'Youth Transition Support Workers' and 15 'Youth Foundations'.

New announcements include a commitment to creating a \$7 million contemporary music package to support local musicians in a range of ways through the *Victoria Rocks* initiative. Other initiatives relate to mental health, homelessness support and increases in apprenticeships and supports for young people to engage in training.

Connect also commits an increase in funding to both YACVic and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, and initiatives to improve young people's access to public transport including a commitment to abolish Zone 3, expand services in some regional and urban fringe areas and trial a new Nightrider service and integrate the service into the MetCard ticketing system.

For full details of *Connect* see the ALP website on www.alp.victoria.com

LIBERAL PARTY RELEASES THEIR PLAN FOR YOUNG VICTORIANS

The Liberal Party of Victoria have also recently released their *Plan for Young Victorians* outlining pre-Election policy commitments. The Liberal Party policy focuses on key objectives relating to mental health, youth support services, young people's safety and young people's engagement and contributions to government.

One initiative outlined in the policy will 'encourage all 17-18 year old Victorians to attend a one day seminar on real life situations by providing a \$10 taxi voucher to be used during the summer holiday period.' Young people who have completed a days' training will receive a 'Youth Card' to entitle them to receive discounts on some retail items until the age of 25.

The Liberal Party also commits to making public transport free for all children and full-time students from July 2007 and to continuing to support and fund the 'Advance Program' and the 'FReeZA Program'.

Mental health is a strong focus, with the Liberals committing to establish a Victorian Youth Depression and Mental Health Advisory Council and three pilot Youth Mental Health Services to provide early intervention services targeting 12 to 25 year olds amongst other initiatives.

The policy also outlines the Liberal Party's intention to establish a Commissioner for Children and Youth, a Ministerial Children and Youth Advisory Committee and to increase funding for both YACVic and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues.

For full details of *A Liberal Government Plan for Young Victorians* see the Victorian Liberal Party website www.vic.liberal.org.au

YHAP 2

In October, the Minister for Housing, Candy Broad MLC, launched *Creating Connections Youth Homelessness Action Plan Stage 2: 2006-2010* (YHAP 2). Building on the Victorian Homelessness Strategy and the Youth Homelessness Action Plan first stage report, YHAP 2 outlines four key directions for delivery of homelessness assistance services to young people and attached actions. It also details the evidence base for the service reforms, placing the reforms within the context of current Victorian Government policy and legislation. The four key 'service improvement directions' are:

- ♦ A strong focus on early intervention and interdependence

- ♦ Tailored accommodation and housing support options for individual homeless young people
- ♦ Greater access to complementary services for homeless young people with complex needs
- ♦ Enhanced youth homelessness service capacity.

The *Creating Connections* report can be downloaded from the Office for Housing website on <http://hnb.dhs.vic.gov.au/OOH/ne5ninte.nsf/Home+Page/OOH-Internet-OOH-Internet-HomePage?open>

YACVIC RESPONDS TO FUTURE DIRECTIONS

YACVic has produced a comprehensive response to *Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians*, the Bracks Government's whole of Government youth strategy. YACVic's response explores the positive elements of the agenda, raises some concerns and highlights some areas that need further attention. YACVic's submission also makes recommendations for future investment and policy development in youth affairs for Victoria. Full details of the YACVic response can be downloaded from the YACVic website www.yacvic.org.au

INQUIRY INTO RETAINING YOUNG PEOPLE IN RURAL TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES

The Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee has released the Final Report detailing findings and recommendations from the inquiry into Retaining Young People in Rural Towns and Communities. Please see YACVic's article on page 4 for more detail. The report can be downloaded from <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/rrsdc/inquiries/YoungPeople/RetainingYoungPeopleReportFinal.pdf>

Jen Rose, YACVic's Policy Officer can be contacted on 9267 3722 or by email jrose@yacvic.org.au

NEW ENERGY FOR YACVIC'S BOARD, PAG AND YRG

CONT FROM P3... Chris is nineteen and currently studying Arts/Law at Monash University. As well as working part time, Chris enjoys several volunteering positions. At World Vision Australia, Chris is Vice-Chairman of its youth movement in Victoria, Vision Generation (VGen), and has just recently convened VGen's National Youth Summit. Chris is also very involved in the MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY campaign, as well as the Rotary Youth Leadership Award and United Nations Youth Association.

OUR NEW YOUTH REFERENCE GROUP

The new Youth Reference Group was recently appointed by the Board of Governance at their first meeting.

YACVic received a fantastic range of nominations from young people across Victoria, and are thrilled to have everyone on board.

The YRG members for this year are:

Cassandra Devine
Jessica De Mercurio
Nicholas Kimberley
Dani Kline
Leah Parente

Ian Richardson
Diana Sandulache
Calvin Tsang
Chris Varney (Young Media Spokesperson)
Maree Wilson

In the coming weeks you'll be able to read more about each of the YRG members on http://yacvic.org.au/pages/about_us/yrg/profiles.htm

Approximately half the YRG is made up of continuing members, and half are new to the group - with a great mix of experience and fresh ideas. Following on from our review of the YRG in 2006 there will be increased opportunities and support for the group to undertake projects of interest, and so far YRG members have expressed interest in a wide range of issues affecting young people, such as mental health, education and employment, drug and alcohol use, homelessness, human rights, bullying, and of course providing opportunities for young people's voices to be heard.

The YRG will be meeting for the first time on December 9th, to meet each other, members of the YACVic staff and Board, and to look at what the coming year on the YRG might involve.

YACVic is looking forward to working closely with the YRG over the coming year.

OUR NEW POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

The Policy Advisory Group (PAG) is an invaluable part of the YACVic structure, providing advice and guiding YACVic's policy work. Nominations were taken for the PAG leading up to YACVic's Annual General Meeting, and we are very pleased to announce the 2006/07 PAG membership:

Robyn Broadbent (Victoria University)
Alison Coelho (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues)
Andrew Lavin
Lenche Kozmevska
Tiffany Overall (Youthlaw)
Michelle Marven (ORYGEN)
Deilia Murray (City of Casey)
Benjamin Skepper
Heather Stewart (Australian Catholic University)
Andrew Williamson (William Angliss TAFE)

Special thanks goes to the members of the 2005/06 PAG, many of whom have continued on this year.



National Youth Conference preparations are well under way with over 200 abstract applications flooding into the office from all corners of Australia. There has also been international interest with presenters, including young people, ranging from the U.K., U.S., Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

Workshop, paper and poster presentations from all areas of the youth sector have been received. The areas include: Young People and Public Space, Youth Disability issues, Youth Mentoring, Grants and Funding, Youth Homelessness, Mental Health, A Code of Ethical Practice, Youth Work in Regional Australia, GLBTI Youth issues, Indigenous Youth issues, Youth Participation and CALD Youth issues.

In partnership with The Youth Research Centre a selection of conference papers are going to be peer reviewed and published in conference proceedings. Therefore the papers will become

recognised publications for academic (DEST) purposes.

On a lighter note Comedy workshops are planned along with Slam poetry and Hip Hop, Stencil Art, Digital Diaries, African dancing, Indigenous fashion and singing workshops. The Conference Youth Team is planning its first meeting this month to start shaping the Young People's Program and additional special events.

Abstract selection is almost complete with a conference program and registration form due out in late January.

The updated conference flyer, inserted in this month's *YIKES!* outlines the registration costs and other details. Please email conference@yacvic.org.au with "conference" in the subject line to register your interest and to receive regular updates.

State Government News

YOUNG PEOPLE GETTING A SAY

A new Government initiative will give young people a say in the allocation of community resources.

Laverton, in the western metro area, is the first location to develop Youth Foundations Victoria (YFV).

Education and Training Minister Lynne Kosky launched the program with young people from the region and said the initiative, part of the Government's Future Directions youth policy, would enable young people to become more engaged in their community.

The initiative is a partnership between the Government, the Bendigo Bank Group and the local community, gives genuine opportunities for young people to get involved in the life of their community while at the same time developing skills and networks that they can put to broader use.

Over the next three years, Youth Foundations will be established in 15 communities across Victoria.

In each location, a group of young people from different backgrounds will come together to examine the needs of their communities, and then will be supported by a local partnership group to use the interest from this funding to make grants to other young people to run activities to benefit the whole community.

The type of outcomes could include putting on concerts, public artworks, educational as well as social and community action initiatives.

VOX POP—YOUNG PEOPLE IN LAVERTON

What do you think of Youth Foundations Victoria?

Karla, Laverton SC, Year 10:

"It's very interesting. I'm glad that students can do things with the community to get things happening."

Lauren, Bayside SC, Year 11:

"It's a good opportunity for the youth of Laverton and the people that work and travel through Laverton to get their ideas and opportunities across to people who actually understand. They'll then have the opportunity to develop them into actual things to do."

Steve, Laverton SC, Year 10:

"Adults make decisions for you and finally kids can do it for themselves."

Allan, Laverton SC, Year 10:

"I just found out about it today and it sounds like a fairly innovative thing. I believe it can help the community a lot. I hope that I can see what this does to the community and hopefully get on the committee."

Daniel, Youth Voice Committee:

"I think it's great that the older people in the community are really recognising the youth and that (the youth) have got some great ideas and leadership."

For more information, visit www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au

POSITIVE BODY IMAGE STRATEGY IN GOOD SHAPE

The Victorian Government has recently announced new attempts to tackle the problems of negative body image in young people.

At the launch, which involved 'real women' models from the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs, Jacinta Allan, announced \$2.1 million for the Teenagers Go for your life - Positive Body Image Strategy.

The program follows the Government holding Australia's first Parliamentary Inquiry into body image last year. The feedback received from young people made it very clear they were sick of being bombarded with images of impossibly thin models and unattainable ideas of physical perfection.

Young people said they wanted to see images that reflect the real body shapes we see everyday in the community.

The images the media, advertising and fashion industries choose to promote contribute enormously to young people's perception of themselves. In turn these can have significant self esteem, mental and physical health implications.

In response to the Parliamentary Inquiry, the Government has established two advisory committees, to help ensure a healthier attitude to body shape becomes the norm amongst young people.

They will work directly with Government on two new committees: the Community Advisory Committee on Body Image, and the Media Code of Conduct Working Group on Body Image and will bring together community leaders, key organisations, media representatives, as well as a number of young people.

Organisations involved in this new approach include the Centre for Adolescent Health, the Centre of Excellence in Eating Disorders, the Obesity Prevention Policy Coalition, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, academics, researchers, and clinicians.

Funding was also announced for a number of activities that will focus on promoting healthy eating, physical activity and positive self esteem.

For more information, visit www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au

Up Coming

CONFERENCES

THINKING DRINKING II: FROM PROBLEMS TO SOLUTIONS

When: 26–28 February 2007

Where: Melbourne

A conference for those wanting to develop solutions to the risky drinking culture in Australasia. It will focus on how to change attitudes, customs and policies in order to create sustainable change.

Registration information, including fees and entitlements, is now available from the Australian Drug Foundation website; www.adf.org.au. For more info contact ADF Total Events Management on (03) 9278 8137 or email thinking.drinking@adf.org.au.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

PREVENTION—FROM POLICY INTO PRACTICE

The 8th International Mental Health Conference.

When: Fri 17th & Sat 18th Aug 2007

Where: Gold Coast

Abstracts can be submitted online at the conference web site www.gcimh.com.au. For more info please email: health@gcimh.com.au

RESOURCES

How young people are faring 2006 is the latest report in the Dusseldorp Skills Forum annual series. To download a PDF go to <http://www.dsf.org.au/hypaf.html>

Youth Poll 2006, an annual survey issued by the Australian Democrats is now online (PDF) at http://natashastottde-spoja.democrats.org.au/youth/Youth_Poll_2006.pdf

The Office for Children has recently released **The State of Victoria's Children Report, 2006**. This comprehensive, 140 page report covers a lot of issues relating to children and young people aged 0-18, including child protection rates, housing and homelessness, child poverty and teenage pregnancy, to name a few. The report can be downloaded from www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Moving Out Moving On: young people's pathways into and through homelessness is a report on the key findings of *Project I*, the longitudinal study of youth homelessness in Melbourne and Los Angeles. *Project I* and the Key Centre for Women's Health in Society have also produced 674 a pocket guide to keeping well on the streets and 'getting out - young people's true stories'. Further information about the resources can be found at www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au/projecti/. Free copies of the resources can be obtained by calling Amanda Tattam on

83447069 or emailing atattam@unimelb.edu.au

The Australian Drug Foundation has recently released the **ADF summer resource catalogue**. The catalogue contains information on all of the resources available through the ADR. There are many resources that are youth specific. To receive a copy of the catalogue contact the ADF on 1300 85 85 84 or go to www.bookshop.adf.org.au

The **YACVic Library** collection is continuing to expand and members are welcome to make use of our resources. We currently subscribe to a range of community related and youth specific periodicals, including the recent addition of 'Journal of Youth Studies' - an international peer reviewed "scholarly journal devoted to a theoretical and empirical understanding of young people's experiences and life contexts". If you're interested in accessing YACVic's library, just contact Larissa on 9267 3799 or email info@yacvic.org.au

Telstra Phone Cards

YACVic has received another 1000 Telstra phone cards to be distributed to organisations that work directly with young people on low incomes and who are in need. The phone cards are loaded with a \$5 value, and can be used in any Telstra public payphone.

It is a requirement that the young people who receive the cards meet one of the following criteria:

- ♦ have a current Australian Health Care Card
- ♦ have a current Australian Centrelink Jobs Network Card
- ♦ be a new arrival in Australia with a Temporary Protection Visa
- ♦ have a current Australian Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card (eg. Age Pension, Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment recipient)

- ♦ be in a crisis situation
- ♦ be in a situation where there is a high risk to safety and security, where privacy is paramount (eg. domestic violence)
- ♦ be a job seeker
- ♦ live in a remote indigenous community.

YACVic will distribute the phonecards to services in multiples of ten, with a maximum of 50 cards per service. Services interested in receiving phonecards should email info@yacvic.org.au or call Larissa Barrie on 9267 379, and indicate how young people accessing your service meet the above criteria. You will need to send a self addressed, C4 sized envelope with \$2.45 postage to YACVic and we will post the cards to you.