

Taking Young People Seriously

Creating Change in Your Community

A Handbook for Young People



youthaffairs
COUNCIL OF VICTORIA INC.

Victoria
The Place To Be

This handbook was written by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and funded through the Department for Victorian Communities. Young people were integrally involved in the development of the publication. Many organisations and individuals have generously contributed their time and expertise to the production of this handbook. Their willingness to share their experiences of creating change has provided the basis for this resource.

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Your participation is valuable

Participation involves being active in decision-making processes and issues that affect you. Our society is enriched when all members participate in decisions that affect their lives. For that reason, it's important that you have equal access to decision-making processes.

The principles underpinning youth participation are:

Empowerment: young people having greater control over their lives through participation.

Purposeful engagement: young people taking on valued roles, addressing issues that are relevant to them, and influencing real outcomes.

Inclusiveness: ensuring that all young people are able to participate.

Participation



Foreword: Minister



Feeling strongly about an issue and wanting to create change can present challenges regardless of your age. For young people, the challenges can be complicated by feelings of inexperience or limited resources to effect change.

This handbook, *Taking Young People Seriously; Creating Change in Your Community*, is designed to help provide you with the tools required for action.

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of acknowledging and respecting young people's views. Without your input into issues that affect you now or in the future we are unable to create policies and services that meet your needs.

The Government's vision is for a society in which all young people are able to realise their full potential and can benefit from supportive and inclusive communities. Working towards creating change is an empowering experience and offers new learning opportunities; doing it in partnership with other people who feel similarly can result in new friendships, and strengthen existing communities or create new ones.

Through your ideas and contributions you have the ability to create communities that shape the future. We realise that it's our responsibility to provide some of the necessary tools and expertise to achieve this. It is for this reason that the Office for Youth has worked in partnership with the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) to produce these handbooks. I trust that you will find this handbook a useful resource.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jacinta Allan".

JACINTA ALLAN, MP

Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs



Young people have always played a big role in driving change in our communities. However, all too often 'older' members of the community don't recognise the contributions you make.

Sometimes this is because you might be a bit more innovative or doing something that might be challenging the broader community. Sometimes it reflects the fact that, as young people, you may not have the same access to resources as older people in the community. For this reason we are very pleased to be partners with the Office for Youth in providing this resource to you. I hope it will be a valuable tool to assist you in taking the reins and creating the change you want to see in your communities.

Often young people are referred to as 'our future'. YACVic recognises that young people are active members of their communities NOW.

This handbook draws from examples of young people who are creating change and making a difference. The research for this handbook involved learning from their activities and experiences. It celebrates the contributions that are made through community action, and hopefully, will provide some inspiration for new forms of action.

By getting active and participating you are not only making our communities better places, but you are exercising your right to be involved in decision-making that impacts on your lives. You are taking some control of your own future and helping to shape the future of the various communities in which you belong.

I hope this resource is something you find useful in turning your ideas into reality. The whole community will benefit if that is the case.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rowena Allen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

ROWENA ALLEN

Chairperson, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria



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Introduction

Why participate?

This handbook is about getting active. It's about doing something to make your communities better. It's a celebration of the contributions that can be made, highlighting examples of young people getting active throughout Victoria. It's a resource you can use to make your own action, and create positive change in your communities.

Many of us belong to several communities, and we all make a difference to those communities. We do it in so many different ways: by being a part of friendship networks, schools, workplaces, sporting clubs, arts programs etc. We do it by expressing our opinions, having a go, getting involved, sharing our talents, and pursuing our interests.

As members of a democratic society, everyone can be part of the decision-making that affects their communities and lives. That includes you. This handbook provides you with some useful information and tips to draw on when you want to get vocal, informed, organised, creative or connected.

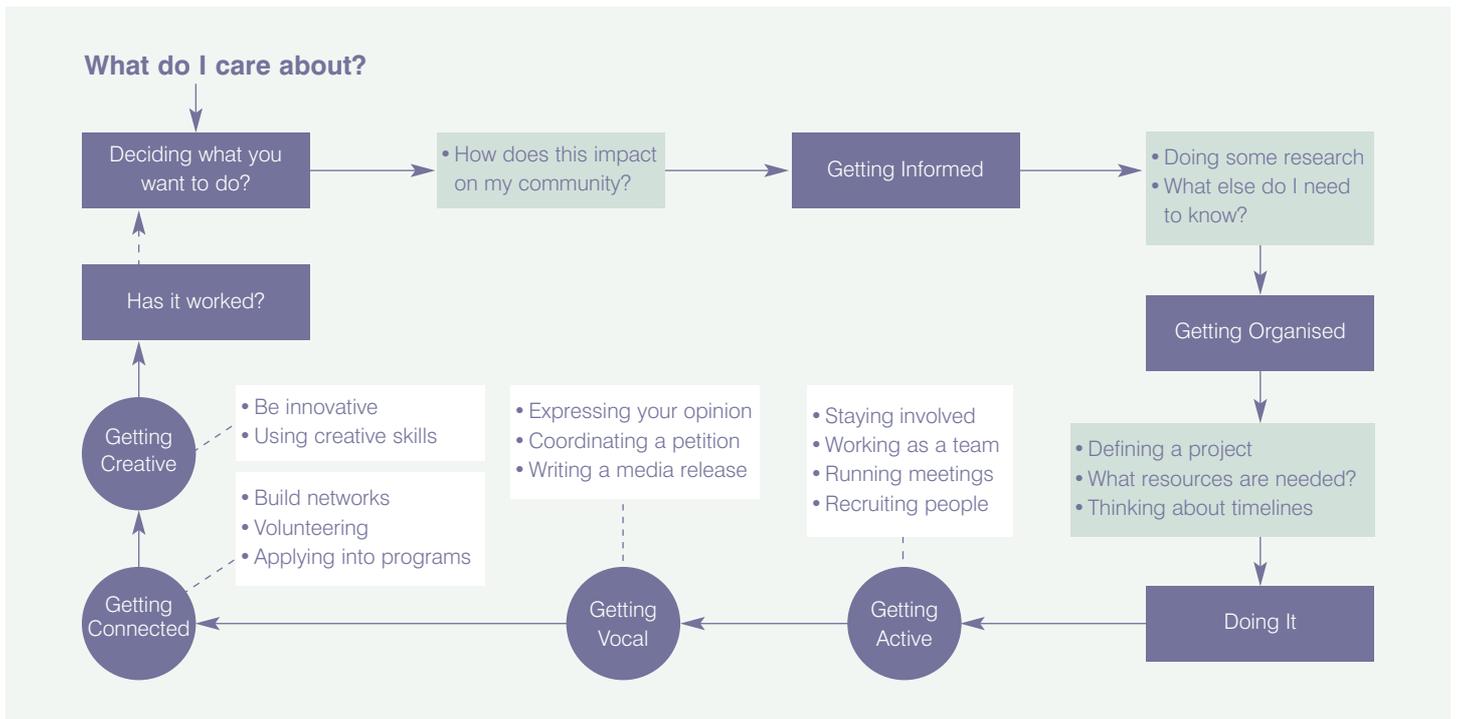
About this handbook

This handbook provides practical advice and resources you can use in planning, creating and reflecting on creating change in your community. Much of the information in this handbook will be more relevant when carrying out forms of action that need more planning. Some of the information in this handbook might not be relevant to action you are planning. Simply take from it what you need.



Participate

The diagram below shows the key areas covered by this handbook and how different actions can be used to create change.



The handbook also contains:

- Case studies – these appear throughout the handbook and relate real examples of action that young people are taking throughout Victoria.
- A fictional example of action – throughout the handbook is an example about the conservation of local parklands. Follow this example to learn more about the information in each section of the handbook.
- Appendices – look out for appendices at the back of the handbook. They contain more information on some of the topics.

Taking Young People Seriously handbooks

There are many ways young people can and do participate in their communities, and in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. This handbook is one of a series that promotes young people's participation. Other books in the series include:

- *Consulting Young People about their Ideas and Opinions*, a handbook for organisations working with young people.
- *Young People on Boards and Committees*, a handbook for organisations working with young people.



Creating change in your community

Taking Young People seriously

Part One

Change in communities



Part 1: Change in communities

The word 'community' is often understood to just mean a local area, neighbourhood, suburb or town. But a community might also be a group of people who have common interests or issues they want to address. They may share social or cultural backgrounds, or hold similar aspirations. One person might be a member of several different communities.

Essentially, being in a community is about being connected, being a part of something. By getting involved and active in our communities we can:

- take some control over our futures;
- use our personal talents and skills to contribute to the communities in which we belong;
- build stronger personal connections and community networks.

Community means 'common-unity'.

Troy Cassidy, FReeZA Project Officer, Streets of Harmony Project, Sale.

Communities are sometimes presented as something that young people can join, rather than something they already belong to.

Donna Gross, Project Support Officer, Darebin Community Building Project

What communities do you belong to?

For example:

local or neighbourhood community;
cultural community;
sporting community;
Koori community;
school community;
gay, lesbian or transgender community;
a special interest community, such as a club.

How does change happen?

Sometimes change happens to us, other times we create it.

There are different ways that change can be created:

- Sometimes we create change by **doing it ourselves**; for example, a group running their own fundraising day.
- Sometimes creating change involves **asking someone else to take action**; for example, students asking the school council for new sports equipment.
- Sometimes change is created by **working together in partnership**; for example, a group of local residents working with the local council to design a skate park.

Change can be something personal, or may impact on many different people. The following table gives examples of how change can affect individuals, communities and organisations.

Personal change:	A person might change their opinion about an issue or idea after learning more about it.
Community change:	When members of a community work together to create change and make something better there can also be positive outcomes for that community. It can help people within that community build better relationships with each other and can assist in building ties between communities.
Public opinion change:	When a person, community or organisation works to create change it changes the way that issues are understood in the broader community. Media reporting also has the potential to significantly alter public opinion.
Organisational change:	When a business or organisation makes changes to the way it works to improve a situation, both individuals and communities can benefit.
Legislative change:	Elected representatives have the ability to create change through new legislation, which can benefit individuals, communities and organisations.

Ways to create change

Get informed – seek out information about an issue affecting your community.

Get vocal – express your opinions.

Get organised – plan what you want to achieve.

Get active – use your skills and resources to take action.

Get connected – link in with other community groups, organisations or other community members.

Get creative – be innovative and use your creative skills to create change.

Case study

Express Media is an organisation run by young people for young people, and offers a range of programs that give young people the chance to participate in exhibitions; performances; on-line projects; and various writing, media and arts projects. Its flagship project is Voiceworks, a national quarterly magazine dedicated to publishing the work of artists and writers under 25. Express Media relies on the work of volunteers who learn valuable skills and forge great connections with people active in a range of industries.

FReeZA in Sale is about trying to get positive recognition for the youth, and to improve the reputation of the area.

Troy Cassidy, FReeZA Project Officer, Streets of Harmony Project, Sale

Case study

The **Courthouse Youth Arts Centre** is a youth arts and cultural centre based in Geelong. The Courthouse has a major focus on performance made by and with young people. In recent years, the Courthouse has produced several new works of theatre that have been written and performed by young people, with support and skill development from professional artists. Creating performances provides young people with an avenue to communicate issues they consider important to a wider community audience. As 17-year-old member Kate McIntosh says: 'Theatre is a voice for young people. We want to use theatre to educate other young people as well as having fun. We have the power to communicate with young audiences in ways adults can't.'



Change





Creating change in your community

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Part Two

Reasons for action



Part 2: Reasons for action

What inspires me to get involved?

'I feel really passionately about the environment and wanted to do something to help improve it.'

'We really wanted better recreation facilities for young people in the area to use, and by getting involved with the youth services at council we found that there were ways that we could actually achieve it.'

'We saw that young people didn't have access to the media in the way that they should, and wanted to provide a space for young people to showcase their talents.'

'I'm really interested in learning more about how to put on a gig and gain some skills in organising events.'

'We wanted to challenge homophobia in our community by raising awareness about sexual diversity.'

What's in it for me?

- A chance to develop skills.
- The enjoyment of working towards positive change in the community.
- Learning more about other people and my community.
- The satisfaction of expressing myself, getting something done and seeing results.
- An opportunity to raise the profile of young people and their interests.

What have I got to offer?

- My desire to make a difference.
- A fresh perspective.
- My personal skills and knowledge.
- My time.





Action

Case study

Dulin supports Indigenous young people to plan educational and employment pathways through mentoring. To achieve this, Dulin develops and coordinates activities through the Youth Network. The Youth Network provides an opportunity for social engagement with other young people who have similar career and educational interests.

'I was wanting to drop out of school because I didn't see any reasons to stay until I was introduced into the Youth Network and its opportunities. Through the Youth Network, we get the opportunity to express our concerns and issues, and to explore different careers and educational opportunities. With Dulin I feel able to discuss my worries with people who understand and want to help.'

Being in PATS (Paying Attention to Self Peer Support Program) and getting involved with the reference group has given me more self-confidence and more self-awareness. I'm not afraid to ask for help if I need it because I realise now that everyone, at some time in their life, needs support. It's given me the chance to be creative and I'm not afraid to put myself out there. PATS has helped me to be much more aware of people around me: what they might be going through and what their skills and needs might be. I think it makes us realise that we aren't alone. When I first started with PATS I didn't think I'd be back for the second night and never dreamed that I'd take on a leadership role. But I stayed involved and I'm glad I did. I realised that it could make a difference for me and that I could make a difference for someone else. PATS was my first step towards making changes in my life and getting out of my comfort zone. I thought this was what my life was about, but PATS helped me see that there were other ways things could be. Now I try to help new people coming into the group and I'm confident now, but I wasn't when I first started and I think it helps them to know that. I can use my experience to help others. I've learnt heaps of skills in leadership, which I use in other parts of my life too.

Alex, PATS (Paying Attention to Self Peer Support Program), Centre for Adolescent Health



Creating change in your community

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Part Three

Working together



Part 3: Working together

Before launching into the practicalities of getting something done, it's worthwhile thinking through some key ingredients for working successfully with other people on an activity or project. It's good to be mindful of these issues at all stages of an activity – when planning, doing, and reflecting.

Working in partnership with other people

A partnership involves:

- sharing decision-making control;
- having an agreed vision for the activity;
- allowing each partner the chance to contribute equally and valuing their contributions;
- communicating well so that decisions can be made together and you can learn from each other.

An activity will be more successful if it is:

- Inclusive – when the activity is accepting of people's differences and there are no barriers to getting involved.
- Empowering – when being involved gives people power to make decisions about things affecting their lives and it's a positive experience.
- Purposefully Engaging – when people are interested in the activity and their roles make a real difference to the outcomes.





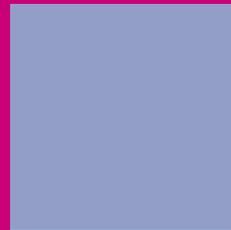


Creating change in your community

Taking Young People seriously

Part Four

Planning it



Part 4: Planning it

While some activities don't need a lot of planning and come together spontaneously, other activities need planning to get them off the ground, and help them stay afloat. This section contains information and tools to help you plan your course of action.

Deciding on a course of action **What do I care about?**

There are so many different areas you can focus on to improve our communities, and even more ways to achieve your goal. When trying to figure out what to do, it's worth starting out by reflecting on the things that matter to you.

Think through these questions for inspiration:

- What do I care about?
- What makes me angry?
- What issues interest me?
- What do I talk about with my friends?
- What do I enjoy doing?
- What am I good at?
- What am I interested in reading about?
- What do I want to know more about?

Parklands example –

follow this fictional case study throughout the book for ideas.

I'm passionate about environmental conservation. I'm interested in learning more about conservation management and how we can preserve our local parklands. I enjoy meeting new people and am good at communicating with others.

How does this issue impact on my community?

Once you know what it is that you want to get active about, it's useful to think about how this issue impacts on the broader community. Doing the following might help you:

- See who else is affected by the issue.
- Improve your understanding of the issue.
- Find out to whom you can talk to learn more about this issue.
- Find other people or organisations you could work with.

Who does this issue affect and why?

Checklist

- neighbours or local residents?
- friends?
- other young people?
- family members?
- local government?
- business?
- school, TAFE or university?
- members of a cultural group?
- community organisations?
- a Member of Parliament?
- a State Government Minister or Department?
- the Federal Government?
- community groups?

TIP: Think about who holds the power to make decisions on this issue. Who might you need to convince to create change?

Parklands example

Issue: Who is affected by the conservation of local parklands?

- Local residents who use the land?
- Community organisations like the local gardening group, or larger organisations like Friends of the Earth?
- Is it possible that local government has interest in the way the land is used?
- The State Government Department of Sustainability and Environment?
- Perhaps local businesses because it attracts people to the area?
- The local schools that take students there on field trips?

Getting informed

Becoming informed is a great tool for creating change. Sometimes doing some research is useful. This section discusses the relevance of research and helps you decide when and how to do it. For more detailed information about how to conduct research, see **Appendix 1**.

Here are a few reasons for becoming informed:

To learn something new

Learning something new is a way of creating personal change, broadening your horizons, and improving your skills and knowledge.

To find out what others are doing

By doing research you can find out what other people or organisations are doing about the issue, while making sure you're not replicating what is already being done and seeing if there are others that you could learn from or work with.

To take responsible action

Being informed about why the issue is important, who it affects and how, helps you take responsible action. Sometimes by trying to create action without knowing the facts, we can do more harm than good.

Taking the time to reflect on the impact of your activity throughout the process is a great way to make sure that you're on track and understand the action's effects.

To prove your point

Being informed is a valuable tool for persuading others. You may want to explain your point to:

- members of your community or the broader public;
- organisations, government departments or local government;
- funding bodies you are going to ask for money from;
- other people or organisations that you want resources from.



Informed

Key research questions

What do you already know?

What knowledge do you already have? Do you already have a position on this issue?

What do you need to know?

Where are the gaps in your knowledge about this issue? What do you still need to know? Does your understanding take into consideration the different views of the people this issue affects?

What sort of information is needed to help answer these questions and where can it be found?

Who might be able to share their experiences or ideas? Does statistical data need to be collected? Are there organisations or services that might have information on this topic? Has other research been done looking into this issue?

How are you going to get it?

There are many different ways to collect information, and choosing the best way will depend on the type of information you need. The first handbook of this series, *Consulting Young People about their Ideas and Opinions*, contains many different models of consultation.

TIP: While you're researching your topic you may discover that you misunderstood the issue or that it does not require being acted upon. When this happens, it should not be seen as a failure – instead take it as a sign that you have acted responsibly.

Case study

The **CRAYV** (Creating Real Actions with Youth Visions) Committee is a group of young people from the East Gippsland region wanting to make some positive changes in their communities. The committee is open to any young people aged between 12 and 25 living in East Gippsland. An important part of their role is to consult with other young people and community members in the region so that they can understand their views and present them back to council, other organisations and the broader East Gippsland community.

The East Gippsland Regional Youth Committee, together with a number of other key players, is helping to fund a youth consultation process. It is working in partnership with the CRAYV Committee to implement the process. The project aims to collect current information regarding the region's young people's issues and aspirations. Importantly, this project will provide new skills to the young people carrying out the consultation through a supported action learning process. We are endeavouring to not only gain current information but also develop a community problem-solving approach to reoccurring or ongoing issues already identified.

The consultation process will consist of forums with young people and other relevant community members and organisations. These forums might be issues based (e.g. transport, employment and training), location based, more broadly youth oriented, or aimed at specific target groups (e.g. Indigenous, homeless or 'at risk' young people). To be successful, the project will require commitment and support from the community's key stakeholders in youth related issues and youth services.

Getting organised

Defining a new project – the why, what and how

A great way to start organising an activity is with a clear purpose and idea of how it might be achieved. It is possible that the purpose might change down the track, but it's great to start off with clear goals, objectives and strategies.

So what's the difference between goals, objectives and strategies?

- A **goal** is **why** you are taking the action, what outcomes you hope to achieve. Goals should be clearly stated and realistic.
- The **objectives** outline **what** needs to happen to achieve that goal.
- Finally, **strategies** specify **how** the objectives will be met.

TIPS FOR SETTING GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:

- In order to make the most of your efforts and create effective community change, it is valuable to think about how your action can have an ongoing, lasting effect. Outcomes that do this are called sustainable outcomes.
- Does everyone involved share the same goals, and has decision-making around goals, objectives and strategies been inclusive? (See Part 3.)
- Reach high, but try to define realistic goals. Careful consideration of your goals' various aspects is a good way to make sure they are achievable.

One of the reasons why the Eritrean Youth Association was established was not just for the short term, but for a long term purpose – to create a community that will remind young Eritreans of their background, and so the community can serve its own people. It is also about all the young people learning independence rather than waiting for someone to do things for them.

Yonas and Rahwa, Young Eritrean People in Victoria

Using the Parklands example

Why are you taking this action?

Goal: to clean up and protect the local parklands.

What needs to happen?

Objectives: create a network of local people interested in conserving the parklands.

Have a voluntary 'clean up the park day'.

How will this happen?

Strategies: Do a letter drop, inviting interested residents, businesses and services to meet and discuss issues.

Form a group to plan the day. Ask local council if they can support the day with resources. Get in touch with non-government environmental organisations to get advice and possibly work together.

Resources

Having worked out what you want to do, what resources are needed to achieve it?

Different types of resources: materials, space, time, skills, people, knowledge, money and connections or networks.

TIP: When thinking about resources, don't forget to consider the things that might support people becoming involved. For example, do you need resources to help people travel to and from meetings or events, or perhaps you might need to translate some information into another language.

What do you already have?

What resources do you already have to put towards the activity?
Don't forget to think about the skills of the people involved.

What else do you need?

What else do you think you need at this point, and where might you get it?
Is it possible to borrow it from friends, family or school; hire it; or access council resources?

Financial resources:

Is money going to be necessary to make this activity possible? If so, drawing up a budget is a useful way to work out how much money is needed.

Parklands example budget for clean up day:

DESCRIPTION OF EXPENSES	COST
Photocopying flyers (200 copies at 5c each)	\$10.00
Hiring bins for rubbish (2 skip bins at \$75.00 each)	\$150.00
Gloves (50) and garbage bags for volunteers (100)	\$50.00
Lunch for volunteers (Sandwiches and drinks)	\$100.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$310.00
INCOME:	
Lunch for volunteers donated by Rotary	\$100.00
Photocopying costs donated by school library	\$10.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$110.00
<i>Income needed</i>	\$200.00



A budget can also be used as part of an application for funding or other financial support, as it shows why that money is needed.

TIPS FOR COMPLETING FUNDING APPLICATIONS:

- Different funding organisations have particular rules about who is eligible for a grant. Check with the organisation about your eligibility.
- Most funding organisations require you to fill out an application form, which they will provide. Make sure you read the application carefully and pay particular attention to the funding guidelines.
- Respond to questions using clear, concise language.
- In your application, highlight the ways in which your proposal is in line with the values and goals of the funding organisation.
- You might need to apply to several funding organisations as your first application may not necessarily be successful. It's good to try to have a back up plan in case you don't get the grant.

Possible sources for funding:

- Organisations that provide grants, such as the Foundation for Young Australians. Visit Philanthropy Australia at www.philanthropy.org.au for other suggestions.
- Government programs, such as National Youth Week.
- Local Government grants – ask your local council about possible grant/funding options.
- Private sponsorship – financial support from private business or individuals.
- Your own fundraising.

Case study

Flair is a philanthropic group established by young women for young women. We are a committee of 10 young women who are passionate about creating opportunities for other young women in Australia so that they can realise their full potential. While at university, the group's founder Lauren Gurrieri became increasingly aware that the issues faced by young women tended to be overlooked. Flair was established to fill this gap, with the mission of enabling opportunities for young women through events and initiatives that raise funds and foster awareness of the issues faced by women in the current economic, social and political environment.

Despite the committee having great enthusiasm and a diverse pool of experience and knowledge, the specific skills needed to establish and run a philanthropic group were underdeveloped. To overcome this, Flair decided that the best way to work would be to align ourselves with an already established organisation. After considering various possible alliances, Flair approached the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) and we have now created a strong partnership. The key benefit for Flair from this relationship is that the FYA has taken on the difficult, administrative duty of managing and distributing the funds raised by Flair to our key target, recipient group.

The FYA utilises its own granting rounds to source applications for funds, and projects pertaining to young women are then presented to Flair to make the final decision about who will receive our funding. This arrangement means that we are able to benefit from the resources and expertise of the FYA, yet also retain considerable decision-making power about how the funds raised are spent.

Timelines

A timeline maps out various key points in a project and when they are expected to be achieved. It is a great way to estimate when you'll start seeing some results and how much time will be needed to complete the project. Timelines also help a project to stay on track and can help people stay focused and engaged. It is important to be realistic when drawing up a timeline, considering the resources you have.

TIP: A lack of time is a common barrier identified by people trying to make a project accessible and inclusive of others. Talking with people about the project, scheduling meetings or activities for when people can come along and having time to debate issues are all things that take time. Allowing enough time for these things is an important part of planning to make a project inclusive.



Informed

Parklands example timeline:

January 1	Have venue for community meeting organised. Start contacting environmental organisations for advice, and doing general research.
January 8	Complete flyer inviting community members to come to meetings. Commence letter drop.
January 15	Letter drop completed.
January 22	Community meeting – discuss planning of clean up day, funds needed and content of letter to politicians.
January 29	Send application for council funding.
February 5	2nd community meeting – update on what has been organised and what else needs to happen.
February 12	Money from funding application to come through. If application is successful, buy equipment needed and advertise Clean Up Day in local newspaper.
March 12	Clean Up Day.



Creating change in your community

Taking Young People seriously

Part Five

Doing it



Part 5: Doing it

Having thought through your planning issues as outlined in Part One, it's time to move ahead. This section provides information about getting a project done. Information and examples are explored under four key themes: getting active, getting vocal, getting connected and getting creative.

Getting active Working as a team

Working as a team is a valuable skill for getting a project done.

It is a skill that can be learnt through practice and involves:

- Building relationships and trust – making time for people to get to know each other.
- Communicating effectively – expressing yourself clearly and listening to what other people have to say.
- Sharing responsibilities – everyone chipping in and having something to do.
- Respecting each other's contributions – making allowances for difference and appreciating everyone's contributions.
- Negotiating decision-making.

A useful strategy to help develop teamwork is for the group to discuss and agree upon a code of conduct. This is a set of terms that helps avoid misunderstandings by outlining the way the group will work together, and what sort of behaviour is expected from team members.

Teamwork skills can also be developed by starting work on a small task together and building upon those skills to complete larger tasks.

For example, putting together a poster advertising the project might be a good starting activity for the team.

Case study

In April 2003, the **Centre Op Shop** was established by young people and staff from The Centre Wangaratta, an adult community education provider. The shop provides young people with an opportunity to gain accredited training while supporting an operating business. The team worked on every element of establishing the business, from drawing up a business plan to establishing work procedures and working out budgets. The program is very transparent because the op shop is part of the community. By being involved, young people gain an awareness and understanding of work responsibilities while adding valuable skills to their CVs.

Trainees don't only gain retail and business skills, they develop communication skills and build relationships – through fundraising with other community groups, and serving the cross-section of people who come into the shop.

Running meetings

Meetings are a useful way for a group to come together and make decisions about how to get a task done. Meetings can be formal or casual, and can be tailored to suit the needs of the group. The second handbook in this series, *Young People on Boards and Committees*, provides detailed information about running committees and meetings in ways that are interesting and user friendly.

Key issues that can help make meetings run successfully are:

- Considering meeting **times and places** – schedule meetings at times that everyone can attend, and in places that are easily reached by public transport.
- Setting an **agenda** – create a list of things that need to be talked about in the meeting. Everyone should have an opportunity to add things to the agenda.
- Appointing an **effective chairperson** – appoint someone to run meetings (the task can be shared by the group's members). The chairperson ensures that issues on the agenda are discussed and everyone has an opportunity to have their say.
- **Recording decisions and actions** – record decisions made in the meeting and resolve what action needs to be taken from there. **Minutes** are a formal way of recording the decisions made in the meeting, but creating a task sheet based on the decisions is another useful way to make sure everyone understands what decisions were made and what will happen next.
- **Using accessible language** – use easily understood language in meetings and on documentation to ensure that everyone feels included.
- **Having some fun** – make meetings enjoyable so that people remain interested and want to attend future meetings.



Active

Recruiting people to get involved

Do you need to get other people on board? Here are key points to think about when recruiting people:

- What **roles** might people have if they get involved? Remember that everyone needs something to do.
- What **skills** will they need to take on those roles?
- What **resources** can be used to support people's involvement?
- What **information** will people need before they get involved?

Flexibility and familiarity

It is easier for people to get involved when the process is flexible and comfortable. Some things that can help are:

- Offer people an opportunity to come along and see what it's like before deciding to become involved, or give out information about what's involved to interested people.
- Offer several different ways of being involved so that people with diverse interests, skills and availability have choices about how they become involved.



Recruit



Flexibility

Take information to people rather than expecting them to find it

It's important to make sure that potentially interested people are getting information that enables them to become involved. Some things that can help in doing this are:

- Take your information to people you want to be involved, such as your local area, school/university/TAFE, workplace, venues.

TIP: IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO SEEK PERMISSION TO DO THIS, PARTICULARLY IF YOU WANT INFORMATION DISPLAYED.

- If trying to recruit people with a particular interest, consider advertising in zines, student and alternative press, shops or venues, or services related to that field of interest.
- Consider making use of existing networks that people use. Organisations that work with cultural communities or services that people might access could be approached to pass on the word.

Make getting involved appealing

People will only become involved if the activity looks attractive. Highlight the benefits of being involved, to individuals and the community.

Some ideas for publicising your activity/project:

- posters;
- Internet discussion groups or web pages;
- advertising in local papers, street press or zines;
- asking an organisation to advertise through their networks;
- spreading the information through word of mouth.

Staying involved, and helping other people to do the same

Sometimes it can be hard to stay involved in a project, particularly if it takes a long time to complete and if outcomes are slow to appear. Some things that can help people stay involved include:

- Having positive relationships with other people involved.
- Having support and encouragement.
- Having a task on the project and feeling like they're making a valuable contribution.
- Seeing outcomes is a great motivating factor. Recognising outcomes, even when they are small is helpful.
- Receiving feedback and updates.
- Being acknowledged for the work they do.
- Knowing that it's OK to come back if other things in their lives interrupt their participation.
- Having some patience.

Case study

A group of students at **Northcote High School** are working to raise awareness of homophobia and devising ways to deal with it in their school and broader community. The group is investigating homophobia by conducting focus-group discussions and surveys, and offering workshops around the issue, promoting acceptance of diversity.

A central part of their project is the production of a book featuring young people's reflections on sexuality as a celebration of sexual diversity. This part of the project is taking considerable planning and will take time to develop. The group have found that the things that help them stay on track are having some fun, working within a timeline, having some patience, and being passionate about what you are doing. It helps that meetings offer members time to chat, express ideas and share experiences.

The project is supported by the school's Equal Opportunity Coordinator and Department of Human Services Secondary School Nurse.



Involved

Getting vocal

Getting vocal is a great way of taking action on an issue. It can involve:

- expressing your own opinions and sharing your knowledge
- raising community awareness about an issue
- calling for change on an issue

Expressing your own opinion

There are many ways in which you can express your opinion about an issue.

Some ideas are:

- Write a letter – to the paper, to your local politician, to the relevant State or Federal minister.
- Write an article – express your opinions on an issue in an article for a newsletter, a magazine, or a journal.
- Produce your own zine – instead of just submitting to other people's publications, create your own.
- Get involved in community radio – there are several community radio stations with various roles for volunteers, some including an opportunity to run your own program.
- Use your creative talents to express your opinion – artwork, prose, performance and creative writing are effective ways of getting across your experiences and opinions to a broader audience.

Case study

SYN FM is a community radio station run by young people that serve the student and youth community of Victoria. It made history when it was granted a full-time license to broadcast Melbourne-wide on 90.7 FM. SYN FM (Student Youth Network) provides access, participation, education and training to all students and youth that are into radio, as well as having established a radio station for young people to enjoy.

One of the ways it does these things is by taking SYN to schools through a training program. When school groups become involved in SYN, they are mentored by other young people with more experience at the station, a process that Natalie Cattach finds satisfying to be a part of: 'I've really enjoyed helping out high school programs, the students have heaps of enthusiasm – they love choosing the songs to play, and we're all learning new skills at the same time.'

Putting together a media release

If you want to bring specific issues or events into the media spotlight, knowing how to write a media release is a valuable skill. A media release is used to alert the media to an event or issue, and helps journalists follow up and report on the issue.

Below are tips for creating a successful media release:

- Clearly state who is involved; what the issue/event/action is; and where, when and how it is happening or has happened.
- Phone the media organisation to find out the name of the person you should send it to. This way, it will have a greater chance of being acted on.
- Timing is everything. Make sure you send in your release before the day's closing deadline. Contact the media organisation to find out what time that is. If you want something to appear in a newspaper that day, it's best to send your media release early. If contacting a radio station, either contact them the night before or bright and early in the morning.
- If possible, aim to send information through on quiet days when there is less news. Sundays or public holidays can be good. Avoid days when other issues take up media attention, such as days that parliament is sitting.
- Write a catchy headline that sums up the issue.
- State when it is OK for the media release to be used. If you want it used straight away, state clearly at the top 'For immediate distribution'. If you are sending it early, but don't want it used until another date, state 'Embargo until (date, time)'.
- Keep it short and snappy, ideally not more than one page. And each paragraph should be no more than one or two sentences.
- Put the most important details in the first paragraph.
- Use direct quotes throughout the release.
- Clearly state the name and title of anyone mentioned or quoted, such as a spokesperson or contact.
- Use clear language, avoiding jargon.
- Ensure the information is correct – check all facts.
- Ensure that you list the details of a contact person for further media enquiries.
- Phone your contact person before and after sending through information to bring their attention to it and to ensure they received it.

MEDIA TIP

- If the media get in touch with you, remember you don't have to answer their questions – you can say 'no thanks' to an interview. The saying that any publicity is good publicity is not necessarily true.
- Find out as much as you can about the story they are aiming to run.
- Ask to see relevant information that the journalist may be basing the story on.
- Be prepared for when the media contact you and buy time if you need it – if you're asked an unexpected question, tell them you will call back with a comment shortly and develop a clear idea of what your message will be.

Parklands example media release:

(At the top - Details of your organisation or a letterhead if you have one.)

For example: **The Lakeside Save our Parklands Network.**

(Contact details)

MEDIA RELEASE *(make it clear this is a media release)*

Sunday 12 March 2003

For immediate distribution *(or state when it can be used)*

Local group gets hands dirty to clean up parklands. *(Catchy headline)*

Today, members of the Lakeside Save our Parklands Network rolled up their sleeves, put on their gloves and got busy cleaning up Viewbank Lake's surrounding parkland. Over 30 volunteers took matters into their own hands, working to clean the area that had been polluted with rubbish and debris over a number of years.

'It's been fantastic to see so many local people come together to clean up the parklands. This is a really great example of local people achieving something for the environment and themselves,' said Paul Smith spokesperson for the Lakeside Save our Parklands Network.

The Lakeside Save our Parklands Network was established in June this year in response to the increasing level of litter in the area. It is a voluntary network of local residents of all ages and walks of life. Today's event came about with the support of Lakeside Community School, Lakeside Rotary and the Lakeside City Council.

'Our hard work's not over yet,' said Smith. 'The group is lobbying local and State Government to take further action to help keep the area clean and preserve the parklands environment.'

'We hope to send a very clear message that the people of Lakeside take the preservation of these parklands very seriously, and that we would welcome any local or State Government initiatives that could improve the area's conservation in the future.'

For further media comment, contact members of the Lakeside Save our Parklands Network:

Paul Smith on *(phone number)*

Coordinating a petition

A petition is an effective way for a number of people to express their opinions on an issue. It can also illustrate broad community support for an issue. Putting together a petition essentially involves writing a statement that expresses an opinion on an issue at the top of a page, and provides space for people to sign their names in agreement with that position. There are a few important things to remember when putting together a petition:

- Firstly, a petition needs to be received by someone with the power to do something about the issue, and is preferably sympathetic to the issue. Investigate whom the petition needs to be sent to and contact that person to make sure they will receive it for you. For example, a councillor in your local government, a State or Federal politician, or a chairperson on a board or management committee of a corporation.
- The statement that people are signing their name to needs to appear on each page of the petition.
- The details of the organisation or individual the petition is targeting need to be clearly stated on each page.
- Personal details, such as a street address, are usually requested on a petition to support the validity of a signature.
- Those personal details must be kept private – they cannot be passed on to another person or used for any other purpose without consent of the individuals who signed.



Coordinate



Petition

PETITION TIPS

- Petitions to the State or Commonwealth Parliaments need to be worded in a certain way in order for them to be tabled. It is important to ensure that the terms of a petition conform to the relevant rules before beginning to gather signatures or the petition may not be acceptable.
- For information on how to format and lodge a petition to the Victorian Parliament, please contact your local Member of Parliament or the Legislative Assembly Procedure Office on (03) 9651 8911 or visit the site www.parliament.vic.gov.au/assembly/factsheet8/facts8.html
- To lodge a petition to the Commonwealth Parliament, please contact your federal Member of Parliament or visit the site <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/info/infosheets/is11.pdf>

Parklands example petition:

PETITION TO LAKESIDE COUNCIL TO CLEAN UP THE PARKLANDS

Over the last few years, the problem of litter at Lakeside parklands has increased dramatically. It is polluting the lake and affecting the health of plant life in the area. We, the people signed below, urge the Lakeside Council to take action to clean up the parklands and ensure they are maintained in a healthy and clean condition.

NAME:	ADDRESS:	SIGNATURE:
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
etc...		

Getting connected

Building networks

Building networks with other community members or organisations can be useful when trying to get something done. These networks can be made because other people are affected by or have an interest in the issue. Creating networks is also a great way of tapping into the resources of other organisations or people. Networks can, however, take time to develop.

Reflect on the people and groups that this issue affects, and consider:

- Getting in touch with other relevant community groups or organisations to have a chat and exchange ideas. How could you help each other?
- Requesting to attend community or network meetings where you can raise your concern and see if anyone else is interested.
- Posting information about your work on relevant web sites or email network lines.
- Developing ways to create a successful network by determining its common purpose or goal; ensuring that everyone has a role, and therefore has a reason for being involved; setting up effective ways for members to communicate.

Case study

The **Bacchus Marsh Skate Committee** and **Bacchus Marsh BMX Committee** were formed after a youth forum was held in the area. Both groups are using the support resources of Moorabool Youth Services to work towards improving youth facilities in the shire. An important part of the work that both committees have been doing is to work with other community groups.

The skate committee formed an important partnership with the Bacchus Marsh Rotary Club to work together in planning the redevelopment of the Rotary Park and skate facility there. Many local residents have a negative view of skaters, so the skate committee is putting together a video and multi-media pack to help inform the community about skating. (It will also become a tool for seeking additional funding for their project.)

And to help build local appreciation of skating as a sport, the committee held an official skate competition in the local park to showcase the skills required by skaters.

The BMX committee is designing BMX facilities for a local park, and has formed an alliance with the Darley Park gardening group to work together on the development and maintenance of the facility. Helping out at the gardening working bee built relationships between members of the alliance and improved communication.

Tap into already existing programs

There are many opportunities to join established programs in the community in order to pursue an interest, challenge yourself, learn new skills, meet new people, or simply to contribute.

I was in a new town, in a new state where I hardly knew anybody. I needed something to occupy my time that would be fulfilling and help me to make new contacts. I found Loop and Lead On. Over the last 18 months, Loop and Lead On have helped me discover a passion and talent for writing. I've gained invaluable experience that will really help me later in life, I've met some great people, and I've had a blast! Many of us got jobs in competitive fields such as journalism as a direct result of involvement in Lead On. The opportunities that community involvement like this can lead to are endless – you're mad if you don't get out there and join in.

Caroline Riseley, Lead On Australia

Lead On has allowed me to become more involved in my local community. Through involvement with local organisations, my community pride and understanding has increased. I have lived in Bendigo for 17 years, but it has only been in the last three years that my attitude towards it has begun to change. I always thought that I would leave Bendigo to study and never return; however, after my involvement with Lead On and the local community, my views on my community and regional Victoria have changed dramatically.

Michael Galvin, Lead On Australia

Case study

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is an international, open program of voluntary activities, designed to assist young people aged between 14 and 25 to reach their full potential. The activities encourage personal growth, enterprise, the development of a broad range of life skills, and a sense of social awareness and responsibility.

The Award comprises of 3 levels, requiring different levels of commitment and effort. From the age of 14 you can begin by working towards a bronze award, moving up through silver and gold as you progress; although it is not necessary to complete the awards in any order. Through the program, you determine what activities you would like to do by choosing from a really diverse range of activities in areas such as service, physical recreation, expedition, skill development and residential projects.

In the Award, priorities are placed on the processes of personal and social development, and having fun as core achievements for participants.

For me, completing The Duke of Edinburgh's Award broadened my life experience, and instilled in me a sense that all things are possible.

Delcia

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has provided me with unique opportunities to travel to new places and meet new people.

Tegan

Volunteering

Linking in to opportunities where you can volunteer your time and energy to improve your community can be a great way to make a contribution, gain some valuable skills, discover hidden talents and open yourself up to new experiences.

There are many different organisations and programs you can approach in order to be a volunteer. To get more information about volunteering, see the resources list **Appendix 2**.

When volunteering, consider the following questions:

- Is this a not-for-profit organisation? That is, an organisation that does not make a profit out of its activities. If you are unsure, just ask.
- What information can I get before I volunteer? For example, do they have a volunteer policy, description of the tasks involved and information about the organisation generally?
- Do they have relevant insurance?
- Check if there will be costs to you. If so, will you be reimbursed?
- Am I doing this because I want to or because I feel pressured?
- What's in it for me? Volunteering should be of benefit to you as well as the community.



Volunteer

Getting creative

Creative projects are a fantastic way to create something unique, communicate a message, get people thinking, and express your opinions.

Be innovative

Don't be afraid to be innovative and create something new. Having a vision of what you would like to achieve for yourself or your community can involve being imaginative and thinking outside the square. You could be thinking of ways to create new opportunities, new spaces or new resources.

Use your creative skills

Celebrating creative arts is a great way to communicate experiences, promote learning and bring community members together. By getting involved in an arts program or project you can develop skills in something you enjoy. The creative arts can be:

- A powerful advocacy tool – it can be a useful means of communicating an issue to a broader audience.
- An effective way to build social connections within a community by bringing people together for a common goal.
- A celebration of diversity – community arts can provide opportunities to express diverse experiences and backgrounds.
- A fun, engaging and rewarding experience for participants and audiences [Creative Connections – VicHealth, 2002].

Case study

In late 2000 some friends and I decided to create a site that allowed people our age to represent our own culture, rather than being told what it was; and voice our own concerns, rather than being told what they should be. And in the process, we provided opportunities and empowerment to a community of young people, culture-makers and hundreds of organisers.

Vibewire.net is that platform. Launched in April 2002, it's a platform for the expression of diverse opinions by diverse people on diverse topics; a platform within which we can share our perspectives, priorities and passions; a platform where 16 to 30-year-old writers, artists and culture-makers can find a voice, interact and communicate with like (and unlike) minded people. It empowers young people through increased media literacy and opportunities, providing support, encouragement, community and resources.

Vibewire.net is as vital and dynamic as the people involved. It is the creation of literally hundreds of people, all of them under 30, who have contributed in ways big and small to its conception, creation and evolution. From the beginning we worked hard to create a volunteer team right across Australia, communicating and working virtually but working towards very real, shared goals. We have worked hard to empower all our volunteers and our on-site community to have a say in the direction of the project. We have published the work of over 500 writers, and many of our volunteers have gone on to paid work in relevant areas – and all somehow miraculously, on next-to-no funding. The volunteer contributors, editors, developers and coordinators are the site's lifeblood, and it is they who will ensure the site remains driven by its original mission.



Creating change in your community

Taking Young People seriously

Part Six

Has it worked?



Part 6: Has it worked?

It's important to ask this question to make sure your activity or project is on track, see how successful it has been, and learn from the experience so you can do a better job next time. This process is often called an evaluation or a review.

You don't necessarily need to wait until the end of an activity or project to reflect on whether it has been a success. It is often a good idea to ask yourself if things are working as you go along. As the diagram on page 2 (About this Handbook) shows, the lessons you learn from reflecting on your actions can be used to decide what action to take next.

What tools can we use?

Doing an evaluation is just another form of research; many of the research techniques explained in **Appendix 1** can also be used. For example, you may want to survey people involved or have a group discussion about the activity to see how successful it has been.

What questions should we ask?

The questions that might be asked in your evaluation will depend on the type of activity you are doing and the goals of that activity. There are no right or wrong questions in an evaluation. Instead, it depends on what you want to find out. Some ideas are:

- Have we achieved the goals of the activity or project?
- Am I achieving my personal goals by being involved?
- Is everyone involved able to have his or her say and contribute?
- Does everyone have something to do?
- Are any partnerships in the activity working?
- Is the activity still meeting the needs it was supposed to?
- If making successful links with other organisations or people was a priority, were we successful?
- Have we used our resources as best we can?
- Are we still within our budget?
- Are we keeping to our timeline?
- How could the activity be improved?



Benefits

Who will be a part of the evaluation?

Who do you need to ask to find out if your activity is on track?

- People directly involved in the activity?
- Members of the broader community?
- Organisations, people or networks you worked with?

TIP: The first two handbooks of this series contain information about how to evaluate a consultation process and a board or committee.

Parklands example evaluation:

The Lakeside Save our Parklands Network had regular discussions during their campaign to see if they were on track. Key questions they addressed were:

- Are we achieving our goals?
- Have people been able to get involved in the network easily?
- Has publicity been effective?
- Are we within our budget?
- Are we using all the resources we can, such as advice from other environmental groups?
- Are we working within our timeline?

At the clean up day, the network left short questionnaires and pens at a table for participants to give their feedback on the network's activities and where they think the network can go from here.



Appendices

Appendix 1 Research

Ways of collecting information

Individual interviews

Individual interviews can be a great way of collecting a detailed understanding of someone's experience, ideas or expertise. An interview can be done formally, or may be more like a casual discussion. It is important to make sure you cover the same areas of conversation when you are interviewing a number of people. This can be achieved by using set questions, or by having a discussion outline prepared. This helps keep the interview on track, ensuring that key areas are covered, and means that comparisons are possible when it comes to putting the information from the interviews together.

Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys can be a great way to collect information from many different people without necessarily doing too much legwork. Participants can respond to the set questions in their own time and the questionnaire could be mailed through the post, via email, from a web page or completed on the spot.

Group discussions

An efficient research method is to get a group of people together to talk about the issues. A type of structured group discussion is a focus group, where the group is asked to respond to an issue by discussing set questions. A less formal way might be to invite people to a meeting to share their ideas or experiences of an issue with each other. Having an effective facilitator to keep the discussion on track is a valuable tool in these situations.

Collecting case studies

Case studies are essentially stories about someone's experiences, or an account of a process or program. Case studies are used to share those experiences with a broader audience and to illustrate a finding from the research done.

Doing a review of literature on the topic

Doing a literature review involves simply looking into what other people have written about the topic you are researching and writing a summary of what they are saying. It's a great way to learn more about the topic and also understand what sort of research has already been done, and where your research can contribute to, or challenge, that knowledge.

Action research

Action research is a term for research that you do as your activity is happening, instead of just before or after the action. When you do action research you are learning as you go, constantly asking how the activity is going, and basing your decisions on what action to take and what you have learned so far. The diagram on page 2 (About this Handbook) is describing a form of action research.

Interpreting information

Once the information has been collected, you must then sort it out in a way that allows you to understand it and draw conclusions. For example, if people were interviewed, sort out the common issues raised in each of their answers, and what the differences were. It is also valuable to think about issues that might impact on the way people have answered the questions, and any things that might make it hard to interpret the data.

Presenting your findings

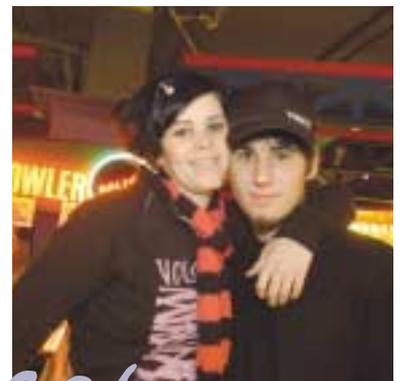
Do you want to tell someone else about what you've learnt? Do you need to convince someone else of the issues you have discovered? If you want to do this formally, it can be called presenting your findings. The best way to do it will depend on who we are telling and why. For example, if you were wanting to present your findings to the board of your school you might want to write a formal letter outlining your concerns, what your research has found, and what you would like to see done about it. Whoever you are going to present your information to, you need to make sure that the format you present it in is meaningful and relevant to that audience. Don't be afraid to present your findings in a creative way. There are many artistic ways you can express the core themes of the research.

TIPS FOR PRESENTING INFORMATION:

- If you are unsure about how to present your findings, ask the person/organisation you want to show about the best way for them to receive it.
- Use clear, accessible language.
- Explain how the research was done.
- Draw out and highlight your main points.
- Make it relevant to the audience.

Regardless of which method is used to collect information, there are three important things to bear in mind:

- **Being accountable** – recognising that you have a responsibility to the people or organisations you have collected information from. Good ways to stay accountable are by making sure that individuals know why the information is being collected and how it will be used, and then reporting findings back to them.
- **Respecting privacy** – respecting privacy is particularly important when collecting personal information from people. The first handbook in this series, *Consulting Young People about their Ideas and Opinions*, contains information about the Victorian Privacy Information Laws. While these laws are only binding to government funded services, the tips explaining how to protect privacy when collecting information may be useful in any situation.
- **Representative samples** – a representative sample is a group of people who reflect the make-up of the broader community, considering things like ethnicity, gender, where people live etc. When asking people for their opinions on something, having a representative sample helps to ensure that the diversity of the community is captured in the answers you get.



Respect

Appendix 2 List of resources

Below are a list of websites, publications and organisations where you can find more information:

Research and Evaluation

The Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies – www.acys.utas.edu.au

Start. Do it Yourself Evaluation Manual, 2000, Foundation for young Australians and Dr Colin Sharp, Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management.

Kirby, P. & Bryson, S., 2002, *Measuring the Magic? Evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision making*, Carnegie Young People Initiative, London.

Wadsworth, Yolanda, 1984, *Do It Yourself Social Research*, Victorian Council of Social Services, Melbourne Family Care Organisation.

Government

The Victorian Government. www.vic.gov.au

Department for Victorian Communities. www.dvc.vic.gov.au

Australian Government. www.fed.gov.au

Local Government

Municipal Association of Victoria. www.mav.asn.au

Victorian Local Governance Association. www.vlga.org.au



Funding

The Foundation for Young Australians. www.youngaustralians.org

Philanthropy Australia. www.philanthropy.org.au

Youth Organisations

See the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc. for a detailed list of organisations in the youth sector. www.yacvic.org.au

Youth Participation

Australian Youth Foundation, 1996, *Youth Partnership and Participation*, Sydney.

Department of Education and Training, Queensland, 2002, *Getting Youth People on Board: How government can engage young people through boards and committees*.

Department of Education and Training, South Australia, 2000, *Youth Participation Handbook: A guide for organisations seeking to involve young people on boards and committees*.

National Children's and Youth Law Centre, 1995, *Promoting Youth Participation: A rights perspective*, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2001, *TAKING PARTicipation Seriously*, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Sydney.

Sercombe, Jethro, 2002, *Telling the Emperor: A guide to youth participation in decision making*, Department of Education Training and Employment, South Australia.

Wierenga, Ani, 2003, *Sharing a New Story: Young People in Decision-Making*, The Foundation for Young Australians and Australian Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne.

Volunteering

Go Volunteer. www.govolunteer.com.au

Volunteering Victoria. www.volunteeringvictoria.com.au

Community

Ourcommunity. www.ourcommunity.com.au

Infoxchange. www.infoxchange.net.au

Vic Net. www.vicnet.net.au

Community Building Resource Centre, Department for Victorian Communities. www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au

Office for Youth

The Office for Youth is part of the Victorian Government's Department for Victorian Communities and is the key agency driving a whole-of-government agenda in relation to Victoria's young people. The office is responsible for policy advice, research and strategic planning in relation to Government policies, programs and service delivery for Victorians aged 12 to 25. It is also responsible for providing a range of means by which young people's opinions can reach and be considered by Government.

The Office for Youth aims to respond to new challenges facing young people by working in collaboration with all levels of government, community agencies and businesses. Through its grants programs, the office seeks to expand young people's opportunities for participation in their communities.

Through the Office for Youth, the Government has a commitment to working with Victoria's diverse young people, and the communities and organisations with which they are involved.

Please contact the Office for Youth if you would like further information on youth consultation or other activities undertaken by the office.

1 Spring Street, MELBOURNE 3000

Ph: (03) 9208 3200

Fax: (03) 9208 3226

www.youth.vic.gov.au

*Department for
Victorian Communities*



Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc. (YACVic) is the peak body and leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria.

YACVic works towards a Victorian community that values and provides opportunity, participation, justice and equity for all young people.

The main function of YACVic is to make representations to government and serve as an advocate for the interests of young people, workers with young people, and organisations that provide direct services to young people.

YACVic is committed to assisting young people to participate meaningfully in the formulation and implementation of social policy in Victoria.

Level 6, 1 Elizabeth St, MELBOURNE 3000

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youthaffairs
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Participation



The Government's vision for young people

The Government's vision for Victoria is for a society made up of supportive, active and caring communities. To achieve this, it is essential that everyone, including young people, has the opportunity to participate in organisations and decision-making bodies that determine our future. The production of these handbooks – *Taking Young People People Seriously* – is one way in which we are working towards realising our vision.

Young people's opinions and ideas count. We value and respect the breadth of what they have to offer and believe it is their right to achieve their full potential. The Victorian Government is committed to supporting and listening to all young people, and in doing so, we aim to deliver services that meet their differing needs.

The content of these handbooks provides information that enables organisations to effectively engage young people who represent our population's diversity of culture and language, sexuality, geographic location and ability. We recognise that some young people need extra support to become involved and these handbooks offer useful suggestions to ensure that possibility.

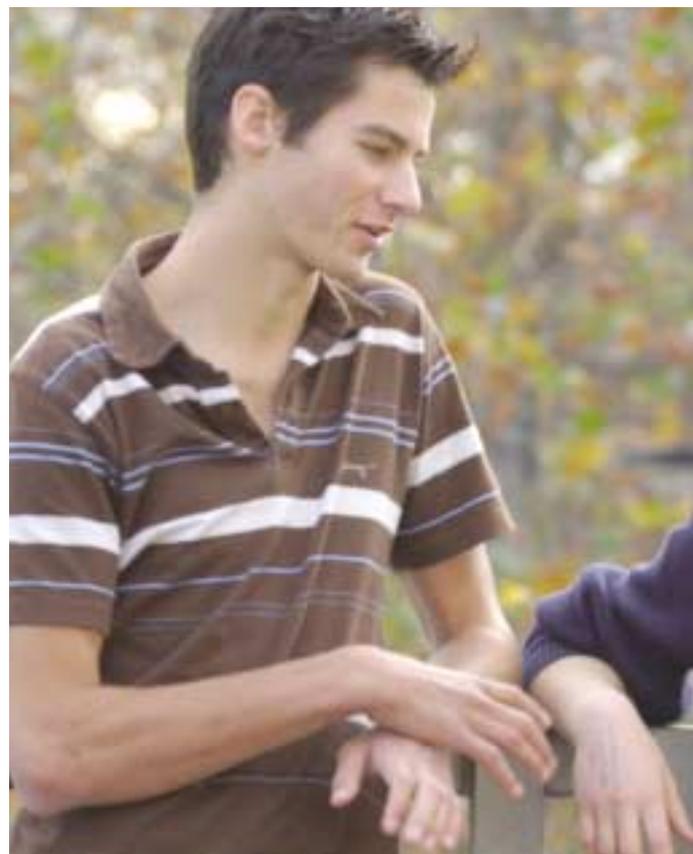
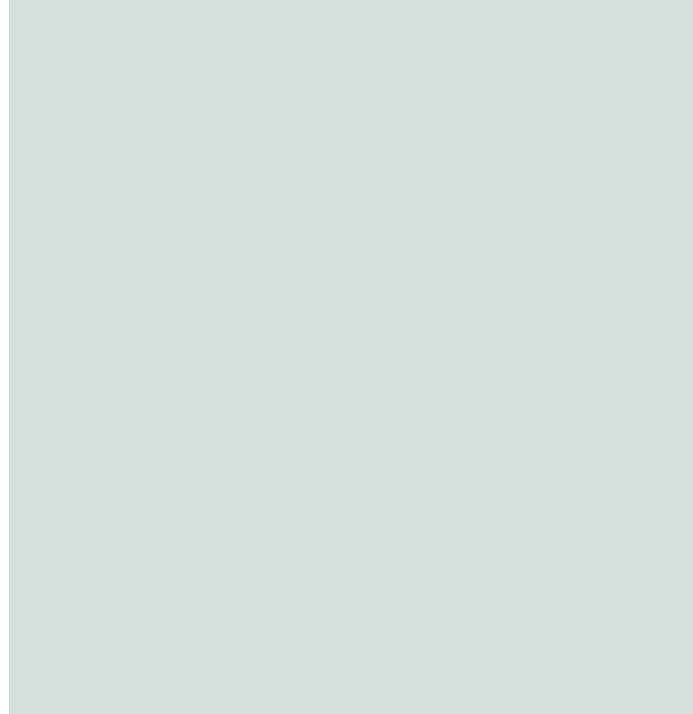
The Government's approach to effective youth participation focuses on strengthening young people's capacity to manage complex issues in healthy and flexible ways. We are designing policies and programs to help young people navigate successful pathways through adolescence, and build stronger ties with their communities.

It is through their connections with various communities that young people will be empowered to make a difference today and in the future. And in order for communities and organisations to reap the benefits of young people's participation, it is vital that they embrace young people's diversity and create appropriate opportunities for their involvement.

For more information about the Government's vision for young people, go to www.youth.vic.gov.au.



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Victorian Communities*

