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Network of
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transitions

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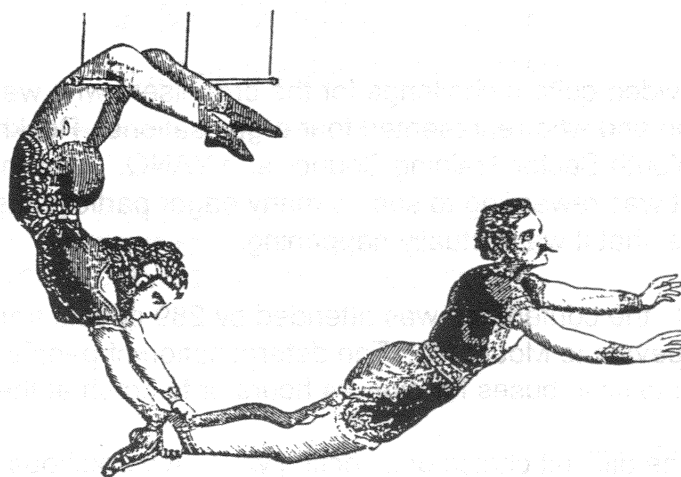
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Making Connections: The Report

The 1990 State Youth Affairs Conference was a significant event in the history of youth affairs in Queensland. This was the first time in many years that youth workers from all over the state have had the opportunity to assemble, to share ideas and opinions, to make new contacts and to renew old ones.

"Making Connections" provided quite a challenge for the organisers who were located in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Yeppoon and who represented four organisations: Rockhampton Youth Forum; the Division of Youth, the Youth Sector Training Council and YANQ. After the countless telephone calls, faxes and meetings it was rewarding to see so many eager participants in the plenary session Monday morning and to feel that it was actually happening.

For the statistically minded: the conference was attended by 289 people from locations ranging from the Gold Coast to Hopevale to Mount Isa. The determination of people to attend was evidenced by their willingness to sit in buses for over 24 hours or to crash at the local camp site.

The conference-goer had the difficult choice of selecting which 6 workshops to attend from the range of 72, "I was like a kid in a candy store" observed one of the participants. The workshops covered topics ranging from Aboriginal and Islander Issues to Young Women's Issues to Community Arts.

59 recommendations were drawn from these workshops.

It was hoped that locating the conference in a relaxed community setting would encourage networking and make the conference experience more enjoyable. Perhaps participants tuned in to the more easy-going pace of the tropics as this conference certainly had a friendly atmosphere.

This conference was also the inaugural major event for the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland. YANQ was thrilled to welcome 91 members during the conference. The election of several new members to the Co-ordinating Committee at its first Annual General Meeting has also raised YANQ's hopes of doing exciting things in 1991.

The conference evaluation is included in this report. The following are just a few of the comments made during the final plenary:

I'm excited. There's been a movement from a nebulous field to communication and evidence of empathy and honesty about issues to do with race, gender and justice.

Maybe we're getting to our late adolescence!

The conference was great. I'm tired. I learnt a lot. I'm encouraged by the energy and dedication. I'm really encouraged and excited.

It is now up to us to see that the energy, dedication and enthusiasm generated at "Making Connections" is sustained throughout 1991.

Jane Folliott
YANQ Chairperson

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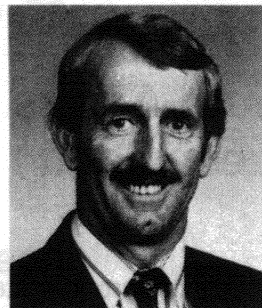


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JIM PEARCE M.L.A.

Member for BROADSOUND



MS GEORGINA WARRINGTON
STATE YOUTH AFFAIRS CONFERENCE
CONFERENCE CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE
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Dear Georgina,

May I extend my congratulations to you and your colleagues on the State Youth Affairs Conference Co-ordinating Committee. From all reports it is clear that yours is a job well done.

The Capricorn Coast offers much to the conference planner. You will have noted the relative centrality of this area and the economies to be gained from the use of such a location.

I am sure that you would have also noted the attractiveness of Yeppoon and the Capricorn Coast and I have no doubt that those who participated in the conference would have benefited from your choice of venue. This area is indeed a most relaxing work environment.

On behalf of the constituents of the Broadsound Electorate, may I again congratulate you on a job well done. We are appreciative of the patronage of your group.

Please consider the Capricorn Coast when you come to organise your next conference. I would be pleased to offer the services of my office to assist you in the future should they be required.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Pearce

JIM PEARCE MLA
MEMBER FOR BROADSOUND
4 JANUARY 1991

THE CONFERENCE ORGANISERS

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland

YANQ is the broad statewide peak body for the youth sector in Queensland whose overall aim is to improve the quality of life of young people in Queensland. Within this aim, it's nine objectives include developing co-operation amongst young people, organisations working with young people, youth workers and others concerned with youth affairs; promoting the interests of young people and the youth field; and to advocate on behalf of young people and the field to the Government and the community.

In the original submission for funds for YANQ it was proposed that YANQ should hold a statewide conference for everyone involved in work with young people. When the suggestion was made to run the conference as a "joint effort" YANQ agreed as this would be a tangible example of one of YANQ's aims - different groups in the youth sector working together on a common project.

The conference was also important for YANQ as it was the first major public event in which the organisation had participated. For the Interim Steering Committee of YANQ it was gratifying to see 91 new members sign up. At YANQ's first Annual General Meeting the new Co-ordinating Committee was elected to take the organisation through 1991. With its new Committee and new membership YANQ is all set to take on the world in the year ahead.

Youth Sector Training Council

When the YSTC met in October 1989 members discussed a State Youth Affairs Conference which would bring together Government and non-Government workers from all regions of Queensland.

The YSTC is committed to providing quality training opportunities for all workers with young people through-

out the state. It also strongly supports the philosophy of local decision making and control in regard to training provision.

The Making Connections conference provided a forum for workers to discuss training needs and priorities; to give the Council direction through recommendations and to participate in the formulation of Youth Sector Training Council training policy.

Division of Youth

The Division of Youth is committed to supporting and assisting providers of services to young people.

As such, the Division staff were members of the conference organising team, the Field Staff provided on-the-ground organisational assistance and the Division also provided administrative support before and during the conference.

\$25,000.00 was granted to YANQ from the Division of Youth to facilitate organisation, participants' travel and funding of the conference.

Rockhampton Youth Forum

The Rockhampton Youth Forum was established in 1982 to bring together local youth workers. It has the following aims: (i) To be informative. (ii) To share ideals. (iii) To avoid duplication.

The Youth Forum undertook to help organise this conference in recognition of the importance of this event, not just to youth affairs generally but because of the benefits that regional areas and Central Queensland youth services would derive.

Also, as an established youth network, RYF felt it was reasonable to put some energy into making sure the conference was successful.

OPENING ADDRESS

Bob Adams

Fusion Queensland

Acting Chairperson, Youth Affairs Network of Queensland

It is a long time since we last came together at a statewide, government and non-government youth affairs conference in Queensland. In the time since the last conference we have seen much growth and much fragmentation in the youth affairs field. This conference has the task of bringing people together from various networks in the hope of overcoming some of that fragmentation. It is my hope that, in the process of coming together at this conference, we might also assist in the development of a vital Youth Affairs Network that changes with changing needs, thus preventing the further fragmentation of our field in the period between this and our next conference.

This conference is the outcome of a substantial amount of effort on the part of a number of groups. The conference is jointly convened by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, the Youth Sector Training Council, the Division of Youth and the Rockhampton Youth Forum. Individuals from each of those groups have put in considerable effort to get us to this point. I am sure that you will allow me to extend your thanks to each of them. Networks only function when there is a key group at the centre of activities. We have been well served by all of those who have worked to get us here.

We come together at a most interesting time in Australian and Queensland History. We come together at a time when Australia's Foreign debt is equal to 37% of our Gross National Product; when unemployment is escalating to a point where Queensland's youth unemployment rate is approaching 25%; when it is becoming almost impossible for Australian families to save and to pay for their homes, and yet we are strangely silent. We

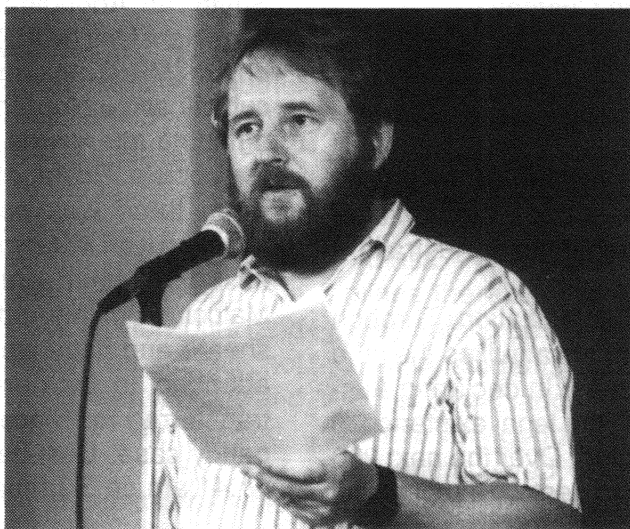
appear to be accepting the advice that all this is necessary so that the economy may do well. It seems that the price of economic well-being is that the people must suffer. The economy is doing well but the people are not.

This time seems to be one of growing partisanism for our country. We have the Greens vs the Loggers and Miners, Blacks vs Whites, Rich vs Poor and so on. This partisanism is destroying our country. It results in the promotion of self interest over mutual interest and, in fact, we could lose the ability to distinguish one from the other. Perhaps one of the dilemmas that this conference could face is that which requires us to identify mutual interests and accord precedence to the same. It is our mutual interests that are worth fighting for; it is around those that we can most usefully render mutual

support.

Finally I ask you to remember that we have a chance to build a healthy and truly co-operative Youth Affairs Network in Queensland. I ask you to remember that this will only be done if you contribute goodwill over all else. Take a non-sectarian approach to your efforts. Debate vigorously and listen deeply. Most of all take heed of what others say. Make the effort to see another's point of view. Look at things from inside their skin. If we can do these things we will have an effective network.

Welcome and enjoy the conference.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

WHO COUNTS AND WHO DOESN'T

Ian O'Connor Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Social work,
The University of Queensland,

Ian is a senior lecturer in Social Work at the University of Queensland. He has been president of the Youth Advocacy Centre for the past 8 years, is involved in the Youth Justice Coalition and is Chairperson of the Youth Sector Training Council. Ian has recently completed significant research into the impact of institutionalization on aboriginal children for the Royal Commission Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The existence of Australia, our system of laws, land ownership and government, rests upon the denial of the existence of the original inhabitants of Australia.

We daily live with the legacy of colonization. Through the legal fiction of the doctrine of terra nullius the land was seized from its original owners. In declaring Australia "land belonging to no one" the legal existence of the original inhabitants was denied. Over the next 200 years, white society has sought to destroy the physical and cultural existence of Aboriginal Societies. Clearly the annihilation of Aboriginal persons was high on the agenda of the original settlers. As a society we deny the very facts underlying our establishment. Indeed for a country that glorifies war, that is ever-ready to participate in foreign wars, and ready to celebrate the heroes of those the savagery of war is a hidden and unacknowledged part of our history (Reynolds, 1982). The objectification of the original inhabitants - the process of dehumanization - rendered easier the process of extermination without guilt and recompense.

The violence directed at Aboriginal society goes beyond the physical. It is violence that many of us as individuals involved in the welfare industry are inextricably connected with. Thus, the seizure of Aboriginal Children - a process which continues to this day -

sought to eradicate a culture - the basis for an identity - the underpinnings of our sense of self - of personhood. Children were removed for "their own welfare" into institutions operated and controlled by the apparatus of welfare. Let me give one example:-

"At 1.25 pm on 29 December 1982 Malcolm Charles Smith, an Aboriginal prisoner in the Malabar Assessment Unit (MAU) of the Metropolitan Reception prison (MRP) at Long Bay, Sydney, went into a toilet cubicle and locked the door behind him. About half a minute afterwards a piercing scream came from the cubicle. Prison officers rushed to the door and, when there was no response to their inquiries, knocked it off its hinges and found that the handle of an artist's paint brush had been driven through Malcolm Smith's left eye, so that only the metal sheath and hairs were protruding. He was quickly attended to by nursing staff and a doctor and transferred to Prince Henry Hospital, as an emergency case. Despite all possible care, he died at 11.41 am on 5 January 1983."

(Wooton, 1989: 1)

Malcolm Smith's life was destroyed not by the misconduct of police or prison officers, but as Commissioner Wooton stated, by:

"the regular operation of the system of self righteous and racist destruction of Aboriginal families that went on under the name or protection well into the second half of this century."

(Wooton, 1989: 2)

Smith was one of the stolen generations institutionalized from the age of eleven. Isolated from his family and kin for eight years from that date, he was detained in welfare institutions which could be described only as

barbaric. He spent little of his adult life outside that most dehumanizing of institutions - prison. A life that ended when he took literally the biblical text "If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out". Our process of human services often involves attempting to impose our own ideals. Such processes in the past have been integral to attempts at cultural and physical genocide.

The purpose of this somewhat circuitous introduction has been to establish that the process of dehumanization, depersonalization, lies at the very heart of the Australian experience. The theme for this conference is "Making Connections - People, Policy Practice". Today's focus is on people issues. In my address I will raise for discussion that most basic issue - the process of definition of who or what are people. I will discuss:

- * Who and what are recognized as people - who counts
- * Who aren't recognized as people - who don't count
- * The manner in which our processing and understanding of young people, working with, or for them, may act to depersonalize or dehumanize these young people.

Who or What are recognized as People

The meaning of the concept people is at one level self evident. That we are people is what binds us together - it suggests a commonality - a place within an ecosystem. It is the basis of the concept of human rights - that people as individuals, as collectivities - have basic rights to exist, to be recognised, to be heard, to participate in social, spiritual, personal, economic and political life. It is a unifying and equalizing element. The construct of personhood implies that as individual (and collectivities) we act and are treated as subject, not "object". That we have the capacity to feel, love, do and relate.

The process of personalization, the process by which we attribute human qualities has been extended beyond human life. Many people attribute human feelings and motivations to their animals. Some even dress them (They do not necessarily extend this personalization to other animals - they continue to eat meat). But in the scheme of things some animals are privileged above individuals - many domestic animals in Australia are fed better than people in some third world countries.

Inanimate objects are also personalized and attributed human qualities. In recent years the "economy" has been personalized, raised to the status of a living breathing animal, that we must care for, work for, to achieve its objectives, rather than viewing the economy as a means of human achievement. We constantly hear of the health of the economy - or its ailing state - that this or that can't be done because it will upset,

inflame, outrage the economy or the market. The economy is given a life of its own - a life must be nurtured.

On the other hand we have dehumanized, objectified, those that suffer in the effort to maintain the health of the economy. Changes in the economy are leading to unemployment - and exclusion of young from the labour market. But the unemployed are portrayed as an object - not as humans whose life and health is in fact seriously impaired. The unemployed are depersonalized - stripped of their identity and feelings and objectified.

Who are People - Who Counts - Who Doesn't

In our society to be a person means that you count in your own right. Clearly there are people and non-people in our society. There are those who count and those who don't. The way in which the concept of people is constructed, the boundaries of peopleness differ over time and within and between groups. However at a general level I would argue the following factors combine to determine whether an individual is constructed as a person - and attributed all that goes with personhood.

I believe these factors are:

- * Age. (Discussed below)
- * Class. - One's location in the social structure determines the extent to which an individual's needs can legitimately be expected to be taken into account. Tertiary students are heavily subsidized. There is a 3, 4, 5 or 6 year labour market program which guarantees them a very good chance of a well paid job. In contrast the unemployed who are normally from a less privileged economic background receive a limited benefit and "benefit" from, short, cheap labour market programmes.
- * Race and Ethnicity. - I noted at the beginning of the paper the denial of identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in some communities is 60 per cent of average in the white community. On average Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men live 22 years less than their white counterparts and women, 15 years less. Their life apparently does not count. Similarly, high rates of infant mortality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are accepted. So too is the gross over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adults in custody.
- * Gender. - Women count less. They're paid less and

have less access to social resources. Women's health problems are less important. The high rates of violence and sexual abuse of women is accepted.

Each of these categories interact with the others - ie male children may count more in certain families and educational institutions.

The important point is not to establish a scale or taxonomy of people - but to recognize - that to the extent that individuals are recognized as persons - that they count - their needs and rights are considered. On the other hand where this is not the case the opposite is true.

Youth or Young People

I now wish to focus the discussion of young people as opposed to youth and children. Youth and children are non-people. They have been objectified, theorized and explained away and denied a legitimate voice. Our views of non-adult life (childhood and youth) reflect an idealized view of adult and child relations. This is because their actual treatment is harsh and punitive, but the attitude to them is clouded in paternalism and protectionism. Society dehumanizes the young and the economically physically vulnerable.

In relation to the aged Simone de Beauvoir stated many years ago:-

"Old people are condemned to poverty ... wretchedness and despair. To reconcile this barbarous treatment with the humanist morality (society) professes to follow, the ruling class adopts the convenient plan of refusing to treat them as real people; if their voices were heard, the hearers would be forced to acknowledge they were human voices."

(cited in Franklin, 1986)

In the same way young people are denied a voice, and their legitimate protest is muted and denied by the hypocrisy of adult attitudes and the myths of which they are based. A central myth is that children are treated with respect and with a concern to protect their best interest. This idealized view means that we deny much of the violence in adult - young people interactions - and attend only to the gross outrages. Thus we do not take seriously that one in four young women is sexually abused by the age of 18 years. This is a figure which should rock the foundations of society. We focus only on child murders or violence in the public domain. This allows us to locate such behavior outside of us - rather than to consider the continuity between our behaviors, our normal social practices, and the ex-

treme "aberrations". Such an approach allows us to focus on individual pathology and dangerous persons - rather than dangerous infant mortality rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children - we would need to consider the dangerous social conditions that cause it.

I'm suggesting the normal practices of adult-young people relations seek to depersonalize and dehumanize the young. The relations are underpinned and enforced by power and the use of force. The extent to which children and youths are non-people is evident in the results of the Office of the Status of Women's research on attitudes to domestic violence. (Public Policy Research Centre, 1988.)

Not surprisingly, women were more likely than men to see domestic violence as an important issue and as an issue affecting large numbers of women. Of the National sample of 1,504 persons, 46 per cent knew of someone involved in domestic violence. Women were more likely than men to know someone so affected.

TABLE 1
ACTIONS AGAINST WIFE VERSUS CHILD -
PERCENT CLASSIFYING AS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Action	Against Wife	Against Child
Deny money to	25	6
Yell Abuse At	48	37
Frighten	74	69
Threaten to Hit	83	46
Smash Object Near	86	87
Push or Shove	91	79
Throw Something At	95	93
Slap or Smack	96	46
Push Down	97	87
Kick, Bite or Punch	99	98
Beat Up or Choke	99	99
Threaten/use Weapon On	99	98

Table 1 shows the percentages of actions persons considered to be domestic violence. The same actions against children were less likely to be defined as domestic violence. They were considered legitimate actions to be taken against children. The results of the survey are more concerning when the extent to which behaviors are considered justifiable are examined (Table 2).

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF ACTIONS AGAINST WIFE VER-
SUS CHILD - PERCENT CONSIDERING JUSTIFI-
ABLE UNDER SOME CIRCUMSTANCES

Action	Against Wife	Against Child
Deny Money To	79	91
Yell Abuse At	57	58
Frighten	24	32
Threaten to Hit	19	57
Smash Object Near	15	10
Push or Shove	15	22
Throw Something At	10	8
Slap or Smack	12	62
Push Down	9	11
Kick, Bite or Punch	6	5
Beat Up or Choke	6	4
Threaten/Use Weapon On	6	6

It is a point of considerable concern that more than one in ten people consider it justifiable to use physical force against a spouse and one in five to threaten force. The pervasive nature of violence in our society is most starkly seen when we compare what is considered justifiable against children. More than one in two think it may be justifiable to threaten or actually use physical force against a child. One in three considered it may be justifiable to frighten a child and so on.

These appalling statistics point to the inter-connections between power, gender, age and the use of violence. I believe that it is interesting that the figures on acceptability of violence towards women were widely reported as an issue of concern, but there was far less coverage given to the acceptability of violence against children

Our Processes

Finally I wish to return to an examination of our processes and the extent to which they may depersonalize and dehumanize young people.

* The very concept of youth is a process of objectifying and problematizing and categorizing a group of people. It provides the basis for and setting young people apart from the rest of the population (ie adults - the normal population).

* Don Edgar has made the point that modern society is characterized by complexity which breeds division:

"indeed society rests upon a specialization of labour and a structured exchange

between groups with different expertise and interests. As individuals we carve out a specialized niche for ourselves. In that complexity, we tend to lose sight of our inter-dependency, the fact that despite our much vaunted "independence" we do not and cannot survive alone.

We have experts on everything: on childhood, youth, aging, ethnicity, welfare, on the myriad skills the work-force and society demand. There is nothing wrong with this; it is inevitable and has positive outcomes for society as a whole.

But the combined effect of individualism and specialization not only hides our basic reliance on one another, it also pushes us into groups whose characteristics tend to be narrowly labelled. The child can/should do certain things. A youth is treated differently from both a child and an adult. Despite the continuum of age and the wide variability in human capacities, we label some as young, others as aged. Though the boundaries blur (you can vote at 18 but you pay full adult fares from 16; retirement used to be at 65 but often happens sooner), we tend to stereotype and deny the capacity of others to do what we can do."

(Edgar, 1990:19)

Edgar in fact argues that it is necessary to abandon the processes by which young have been set apart from other parts of the population. He argues that the process of setting apart has placed youth in a role of being "socially useless", excluded from labour market.

* lacking a sense of place

* lacking a stake in the school and the wider society

He calls for the development of intergenerational exchange programs that focus on the dignity of exchange.

My third and final point is that the processes of working with young people may contribute to the process of objectification and depersonalization. The process of developing specialized knowledge and skills - and specific targets for intervention - in this case youth - may result in us objectifying those with whom we seek to interact. We become the source of knowledge, we know what to do and therefore we can do it for, and to people. Our knowledge or approach is socially vali-

dated. As a group we may get together, as in this conference, formulate ideas, translate them into practice and so on. There is no similar structure by which young people may have their ideas validated. Clearly they have specialized knowledge about "working with older people who think they are working with us." But theirs is not a legitimate knowledge - it is often called "manipulation" or being "street wise" etc..

The trend towards the development of specialized services for young people may have positive and negative effect. To the extent that it is integrated and challenges the main stream to stop excluding, dehumanizing and denying young peoples' needs, it achieves a progressive social function. To the extent that the services develop narrow specialized knowledge about their clients, and compartmentalize aspects of young people's lives, they offer further dangers.

The processes by which young people are dehumanized and depersonalized are complex and pervasive. we cannot wish it away. It affects all of our lives and the lives of the people with whom we live and work. If we ignore it then we participate in the process of its reproduction: with the same consequences that have flowed from white society ignoring the consequences of colonization; of men, the consequences of their relationships with women.

I believe we need to reflect on the following questions:

- 1 *Whose needs count (or are validated) in your agency/practice/organisation?*
- 2 *Whose needs are discounted?*
- 3 *In what ways does your practice depersonalize and objectify those with whom you work or who are the focus of your work?*
- 4 *What steps can you take to ensure that your practice and the practices of others do not depersonalize and discount those with whom you work (or should be working)?*

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(L to R) Rod Lees; Bob Adams; Colleen Kelly and Ian O'Connor fielding questions in the discussion after Ian's speech.

POLICY AND DECISION MAKING

- ITS IMPORTANCE FOR

THE YOUTH SECTOR IN QUEENSLAND

A paper presented to the State Youth Conference, Yeppoon, November 1990

Jill Jakel

**Cairns/Mulgrave
Community Development Officer**

Jill has worked in community services in the far north for 10 years, eight of those years with non-government community based programs and the last 2 years as the Community Development Officer with the Cairns City and Mulgrave Shire Councils.

Jill has been actively involved in developing innovative services for homeless and at risk young people in the Cairns region over the last twelve months. She has a strong commitment to local decision making and community control.

Jill is also heavily involved in Community Radio and for the last 5 years has produced and presented programs on contemporary music, the arts and social issues.

She currently hosts a weekly radio magazine program entitled "Community Clipboard".

I'm Jill Jakel and I'm going to talk about Policy today. I think I had better start off by letting you know that I'm certainly no policy guru and in fact I don't have any academic qualification in policy making or in much else either, but I do have ten years experience of working in the non-government Sector in the Far north and in lots of ways I consider that to be a worthy apprenticeship.

What I'd like to do is to talk about some of my own personal experiences and how I became involved in the area of Policy, not because I particularly like talking about myself, but because I feel that it has been an evolutionary process for me and I think that it could really lay the ground work for people working in a service delivery model who haven't yet thought about the importance of becoming involved in policy and decision making.

I'd like to then go on and look at some of the broader issues in policy and decision making processes and then talk about a couple of case histories that illustrate the issues.

I arrived in Far North Queensland about ten years ago. I'd been living in the Northern Territory for seven years before that so I thought I knew what isolation was. I came to Cairns knowing that the Far North Region was the same size as Victoria and all those wonderful statistics about the vast distance from Brisbane, but I don't think I was prepared for the isolation in the sense that all the power was vested in Brisbane and most services that did exist were off-shoots of services based in Brisbane. At least in the Northern Territory I had lived in Darwin, and that was basically where the seat of Government was, so there was relatively easy access to the people who were in positions of power and authority.

When I started working in Cairns and that was pretty much as soon as I arrived, I was really shocked to discover that there were very few non-government community welfare services and no real infrastructure. I was keen to become part of the solution and became involved in a lot of community based welfare projects, as a waged and as a non-waged worker. I became a volunteer, a committee member and a paid employee in a range of services often simultaneously.

I spent some years attending committee meetings, workers meetings, working bees. I travelled to conferences in Brisbane and interstate, I was involved in lobbying and advocating, and I worked in basic service delivery. So I was working what I call "at the coalface" and a lot of the work I was involved in could be classified as "band-aid" work. After about four or five years I think I must have rusted out, because I decided that I needed a break from the Welfare Sector. In fact I even made a

vow that I was never going to work for a non-government agency again and I was certainly not going to work in Community Welfare.

However after several months I began to think about the most effective way to use my skills and experience. I thought there must be a better way to deal with direct needs and that it's not enough to put a bandaid on problems. I realised that workers are never going to be able to mop up all the blood on the floor from the clients that come through the doors bleeding (emotionally rather than physically). Having a break from the direct demands of service delivery enabled me to think somewhat more laterally. What had become very clear to me was the people who work at the coalface are very well aware of the needs of their clients, far more so than a lot of other people who are not involved in direct service delivery. Also because workers in the field are in constant contact with their clients they are ideally situated to identify needs, to check back to their clients to validate needs, to evaluate effectiveness of programs and to identify changing or emerging needs.

It raised some key questions for me such as:

- how can we make sure that we provide what clients need?
- how can we get funding for needs-based services?
- how can community workers become part of the decision making process?
- how can community workers become involved in developing policy?

These questions were floating around in my head for a while and I was then appointed as the Community Development Officer for the Cairns City and Mulgrave Shire Council. As a lot of you will be aware, the Cairns Region has been identified as a high needs area with the highest rate of single parents in the state, high level of transience, a dearth of low cost accommodation, burgeoning new suburbs with no infrastructure and no sense of community, and a plethora of associated social problems particularly effecting young people all of which poses an enormous challenge to community services workers and planners.

Being involved in the decision making process and developing policy seemed to me to be vital if services were ever going to attempt to serve the real needs of clients. So when I was asked to speak at this conference about policy I tried to clearly set down an outline of the issues around policy as I saw them. They include:

- What is policy?
 - * how do we assess needs?
 - * who do we ask?
 - * where do consultation, networking and advocacy fit in?
- How can it be developed?
- What hidden agendas are there?
 - * how can we insure we maintain a social justice perspective?
 - * how do we avoid being steamrollered?
- How is the process resourced?
 - * who really pays?
- How can policy be validated/ratified?
- What happens to policy?
 - * who follows through?
- How are outcomes evaluated?
- How can policy be updated?

As part of my brief for this morning's presentation, I was asked to look at the effect of existing government policy on services in Far North QLD. To help explore that I drew up a brief questionnaire which was designed to assess the amount of input into and impact on government youth policy that regional workers felt they had had.

The questionnaire was trialled at the inaugural Youth Forum in Cairns in September and overall the broad results of the survey indicated that government workers felt they had had input into and impact on policy issues and usually via senior departmental personnel. The non government workers however, felt they had had little to no input or impact policy wise and said the reasons for this included lack of opportunity, and lack of experience.

Most respondents of the survey indicated that policy changes in the area of equity and access (ie needs based funding) were needed as were more programmes with a preventative approach.

There was a mixed response to assessing the most effective way of having input into government policy with a general agreement that meetings and surveys were the least effective. Generally respondents agreed that personal contact, either with senior government officers or with politicians was more effective.

I also contacted key people in Mt. Isa and Townsville and there was general consensus with the Cairns

response. Mt. Isa in particular expressed a feeling of great isolation with very few resources on the ground and great difficulty attracting and keeping generalist youth workers with no-one really interested or skilled in the area of policy development. They did however, feel that the political spotlight had been focused on them recently and that had been far more effective in developing services.

What did emerge strongly in continuing discussions was that regional centres were so under resourced both in terms of programmes and personnel that they often grabbed any sort of funding available that vaguely related to their needs, often trying to fit the local needs to a round. I'm sure we've all been through that sort of compromise at some stage but I am having to seriously question if half a loaf is better than none. Often accepting inadequate funding lets governments get away with thinking they have resourced an area and keeps regional people so busy trying to prop up a service that they have no energy left to lobby for more appropriate resourcing.

Two recent projects in the Far North have highlighted some of the issues and problems in this regard

- a) The Burdekin Process
- b) The C.S.H.A.

To set the scene somewhat it is important to understand that only very rudimentary networking infrastructure exists in the Cairns region. Most community workers support the concept of inter-agency interaction but most are unable to budget time and personnel to attend meetings on a regular basis. Mt Isa and Townsville fare a little better in this regard. Also there are no formal links between the three regional centres of Mt Isa, Townsville and Cairns with contact occurring on an informal basis only.

As for the Cape and Gulf regions - they are clearly in the too-hard category and are only serviced by individual government departments with sometimes up to 22 different departmental representatives descending on one isolated community in one week.

Burdekin Process

Most of you I'm sure, are aware of the Burdekin Inquiry in Homeless Children. As a result of the report Cairns was targeted by at least three different government departments for funding of innovative services. The key government players have been the Attorney Generals Department (Federal), The Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs (State) and the Health Department (State).

The Attorney Generals Department struck first with a phone call to say if Cairns put in a submission for a Youth Mediation Service we'd probably get it - and the submission had to be in by the end of the week. Mediation was new territory for most of us in Cairns but undaunted we dragged a few people off the street, took a crash course in the principles of mediation and had a submission writing workshop one morning and lo and behold, got funded. Apparently the Attorney General's Department were very impressed with our submission which surprised me as I considered it a hasty response to a much needed service that we didn't want to miss out on.

Since then however we have gone through lengthy negotiations to re-structure the programme to fit in with the departments "new" guidelines - and this before the service has become operational and could therefore have been trialled and evaluated.

Certainly we complain about guidelines imposed on us by funding bodies but it seems an incredible waste of local energy to develop programmes and then discover months down the track that the funding body is really not able or willing to fund anything other than their own model.

The next bag full of money came from the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs and the Department of Community Services and Health for "Innovative Services for Homeless Youth".

At least the "powers that be" sent someone to Cairns to whip us into a frenzy of submission writing.

However the Brisbane worker arrived at short notice and at a time of year when workers were thin on the ground and very over-committed.

Everyone with a stake in the young sector was asked to attend meetings, identify needs, develop strategies and translate these into programmes.

We were all well aware of the needs but a lot of us had limited time and skills to develop practical responses and we ended up with programmes that suspiciously represented some hidden government agendas.

That's not to say that the services aren't needed, it's just that the carrot-on-a-stick approach to community consultation and programme development is a poor strategy that isolates and alienates players who have everything to gain by working co-operatively.

I also consider it a huge imposition to expect workers and committee members to somehow find the time to take on a substantial extra workload at almost no notice when if they don't they will be further penalized in the

medium and long term with no new funded services.

The Health Department fared somewhat better as they had a long lead time for submissions. Also they resourced two delegates from each targeted region to attend a training and planning session in Brisbane - just travel and accommodation expenses not the costs of relief staff at the respective services however. A new services development worker has now been funded statewide to assist in the development of the new health services which should greatly reduce the "re-inventing the wheel" syndrome.

We estimate it will be twelve months from the start of the submission writing process to the employment of the first worker with the Health Service and though this might seem an inordinate delay it had enabled the community to understand and support the project far more effectively than all the other innovative programmes that have been developed more rapidly.

As part of the second round of sittings of the Burdekin Inquiry local workers went through an informal evaluation of our experience which was presented to the inquiry and copies of that are available for anyone interested.

Commonwealth State Housing Agreement

In line with the agreement the state signed with the commonwealth a strategy had to be developed to enable community input into the allocation state wide of housing resources.

Regional housing referral workers were brought to Brisbane to "discuss" possible ways to achieve this and came up with a model. However it became clear that the government had already decided how consultation would be achieved and regional workers then had to adjust their vision to fit. While it is understandable that governments do have fiscal restraints it does seem unfair to raise a community expectation of a grass-roots developed process when clearly an agenda (albeit hidden) has already been set.

The consultation model to be used revolves around one community based worker located in each of four government designated regions of Queensland "facilitating" community input.

For the Far North, encompassing Mt Isa, Townsville, Cairns and The Rest it meant that we needed a formal cross-regional body that could truly represent the regions and provide sound financial and administrative managements for the new C.S.H.A. workers programme.

The "new" body not only had to manifest itself immediately as there was no existing body, but it also had to do it without any financial or personnel resourcing.

Needless to say it has turned out to be a lengthy and painful process with the government now indicating that they will

"manage" the worker for the first six months while the community "gets its act together". While in lots of ways this is about the only practical short-term option it certainly reflects a poor understanding on the governments part of regional profiles and the resources of the community sector. It then becomes the epitome of the top-down versus bottom up approach to community involvement and creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of the non-government sector not being capable of working with the government sector.

While both of these projects illustrate the problems experienced working with the government sector I hasten to add that a lot of important lessons have been learnt by both sectors.

Historically the non-government sector has operated in a climate of isolation and exhaustion.

Dramatic changes are occurring within government particularly in regard to consultation with the non government sector and the development of new programmes. I'm sure the government sector is realizing that it is not enough to simply throw away money at the community and expect programmes to spring up overnight. As any gardener would know well prepared ground is essential for growth. The non-government sector needs to be nurtured and nourished by adequate funding for essential non service delivery functions, such as training, resourcing management committees, coordinating, networking etc. to enable it to become a true partner in negotiating with the government sector.

Often non-government sector workers who are seconded into roles of facilitating consultation and networking and new programme development are not trained in this specialised area and are not funded to do it. They have to juggle their funding guidelines and competing service demands.

There are also, of course, important lessons and implications for the non government sector. It is important for them to develop strategies and action plans to strengthen their structures and also their linkages with each other. They have to have a sound knowledge and understanding of local needs to help avoid political quick fix solutions often touted by governments. They need to take the initiative in becoming actively involved in developing policy and being part of the decision making process.

If the non-government sector does its homework, and ensures that its policies and recommendations are soundly developed and strongly validated by our communities, they then have every right to demand equal status with the government sector. Together the two sectors can then take a series of quantum leaps over the problems of the past and work co-operatively towards the challenges of providing appropriate, well planned and adequately resourced services for and with our country's most valuable and important asset - our young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Endorsed by Conference

YOUNG WOMEN'S ISSUES

1. That workers from the area of incest survivor support contribute their experience and ideas in workshops and other training forums with police trainees and armed forces personnel in order to raise awareness of the reality of the trauma involved in social adjustment for incest survivors.

2. That schools/TV and other media run programmes declaring the rights of women and children in their communities to develop the skill of saying "no" to sexual violence.

3. Given that young women make up 50% of the youth population targeted by youth affairs, we desire that all policy concerned with youth, has to be specific in addressing the multifaceted needs of young women in accordance with consultation with young women.

4. Given the specific issues relevant to young women which include rape, incest and sexual harassment, workers with young women must acknowledge and respect the fundamental right to women's-only safe space to engender a sense of identity and self-esteem that is necessary for young women to articulate their experiences of abuse.

5. That the Youth Sector Training Council take on the responsibility to organise and provide training for workers with young people in the area of feminist analysis and work practice within the next 12 months.

6. That all the workshops held at the next YANQ conference will be based on a social justice perspective which will incorporate extensive cultural, gender and feminist analysis.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. To empower young people, youth workers and the wider community to implement a process of change, by encouraging them to develop "bite-size", manageable strategies that facilitates change in incremental stages, and in particular, to collaborate with young people in the CREATION OF A MECHANISM that enable young people to have meaningful and legitimate contribution to the policy development process.

2. That local government take up responsibility for planning and co-ordination of human service delivery in "socially isolated" areas (ie spacial and geographic). The Local Government Association to encourage and support local governments in implement strategy, further supported by state legislation. That local communities are enabled to identify their own needs, educated and empowered to represent these needs and interests at appropriate levels of government.

3. The youth sector foster the concept of inter-agency networks involving government and non-government agencies, and encourage the participation and training of workers and the general community in the activity of interagency networking.

4. YANQ Newsletter and other avenues be used to publicize the activities of interagencies and to document successful community based interagency programs/processes.

ABORIGINAL & ISLANDER ISSUES

1. That this conference recommends that the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs fund, under the "Domestic Violence Initiates Programme", a State Aboriginal and Islander Conference on Domestic Violence. This conference should discuss the following issues: Education; Research; Community Statistics; Men's Women's and Youth Needs; Urban, Rural, Community Needs; Funding Needs; Problems of Geographical Isolation; Legislation. (carried unanimously).

2. That the education process is the core of change for domestic violence and the education department must address this at the primary education level and in consultation with the aboriginal and islander community (carried unanimously).

3. That this conference recommends that empowerment processes be implemented and given a high priority backed up by resources when considering all issues (including land rights) that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

4. That land Rights be placed again, on the political agenda for the Social, Spiritual and Economical benefit and the future well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

5. All government and non-government employees dealing with Aboriginal and Islander programs be given on going cultural awareness training to assist them in dealing with Aboriginal and Islander clients.

6. Future Youth Conferences be widely advertised through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission regional offices and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders interest be represented in the planning of those conferences.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

1. That a State-wide juvenile crime prevention strategy must be socially located, that is, it requires the participation of all levels of society including co-operation from politicians, government at all level, judiciary and the local community. (The group identified principles for implementation on which this strategy needs to be developed.

2. Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs implement a broad based Community Consultation process prior to the introduction of the Juvenile Justice Bill and incorporate a compulsory review process in the Bill.

3. That in order to achieve equitable access to Juvenile Justice statewide, it is recommended that:

a) Collaboration occurs between the Justice Department, Development of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs to adequately resource the development and establishment of Youth Advocacy centres throughout Queensland.

b) A comprehensive training strategy for all workers within the Juvenile Justice System be developed by Youth Sector Training Council.

c) A statewide information network be developed by Youth Justice Coalition.

4. a) This forum recommends that regional networks be formed in relation to juvenile justice issues. Where possible, these could be part of existing inter-agencies or through a new local network being established. Further to this, that the Youth Justice Coalition play a core role to facilitate this. The use of YANQ's infrastructure to support this was endorsed.

b) Further, the network be used to specifically engage in the consultative process surrounding the new juvenile justice legislation.

5. That there is a consultation process defined and controlled by the Murrie and Torres Strait Islander communities to identify their needs and that specific emphasis be given to incorporating the findings in the juvenile justice legislation.

HEALTH

1. That YANQ encourage and actively lobby for legislation that covers the relationship between all primary health care workers (youth workers, nurses, doctors) to enable destratification of functional relationships eg Aboriginal Health Care Worker programme in the N.T. and the Nurse Practitioner programme in N.S.W. (ie Wholistic model of health care).

2. a) That YANQ be a voice for young people in recognition of their need for a real say and choice in their lives. It is suggested that YANQ hold a young people's forum or consult with young people in other effective and relevant ways.

b) That YANQ encourage funding bodies to develop relevant quality based health programmes rather than medical quantity based health programmes.

3. All programs for young people (not exclusively health) should be based on a Primary Health Care model which is mind, body and soul.

4. That the Youth Sector be involved in the current review process conducted by the Public Sector Management Committee into the Health Department, to encourage and promote the adoption of the Primary Health Care model (World Health Organisation definition).

5. That the Youth Sector be involved in the current regionalization process of the Health Department to encourage and promote the primary Health Care model and make young people a priority.

EMPLOYMENT

1. Because present programmes for young do not meet their total needs due to the emphasis on employment and training outcomes, all therefore recommend that government, education and training departments, in consultation with the community, re-define, in broader terms, the outcomes of programs for all youth.

2. That all levels of government actively pursue full employment strategies to guarantee young people the opportu-

nity for employment or financial equity and independence.

3. Realistic job creation programs for youth and financial assistance for employers and industry be a priority for governments.

4. There should be realistic funding programmes (job training) combined with economic support for employers to encourage job creation for young people.

EDUCATION

1. That communities and the Department of Education, through the local school system, develop structures to disseminate information between themselves.

2. That the youth sector opens channels of communication with local school personnel to address the needs of marginalised young people. That formalized connections between a number of youth sector bodies such as YANQ and the Department of Education be established.

RURAL ISSUES

1. That mechanisms be developed so that rural people are involved in the design and implementation of services in their community.

2. That services be provided in a way which is appropriate, accessible and participatory for rural areas.

3. That rural and remote young people and agencies should have effective, efficient and equitable input into policy development.

4. The Department of Education investigate further alternatives which can provide suitable secondary education in areas of remote Queensland which will address living, social and academic skills.

5. Local Government be actively encouraged by the State Government to become involved in human service delivery through a community consultation process.

ACCOMMODATION

1. Queensland needs an adequate number of appropriate accommodation options for young people.
2. Government funding will be provided for the community youth housing sector to develop a comprehensive Queensland Youth Housing Policy.
3. Young people in the care of the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs are to be protected, housed and supported in line with the departments statutory responsibility.
4. That adequate funding be made available for the Youth Housing sector to effectively consult and develop policies at a local, regional, state and national level.
5. Agencies within the Youth Housing sector recognise the need to make a commitment to effective consultation and co-ordination processes starting at a local level.



and information of sexual identification and sexual relationships.

3. That sexuality be put on all youth agendas and included in all policy relating to young people

5. That issues of sexuality are addressed in:

- youth worker training
- policies of youth agencies/services, government divisions and departments

6. That people who work with young people, or who are interested in the issue of sexuality, be resourced to establish a network to provide information, support and training.

3. That one of the major focuses of the first YANQ policy forum be concerned with the issue of moving towards reconciliation and understanding between Aboriginal and Islander and white young people and agencies in Queensland and that the Research and Policy Officer be called on to liaise with Aboriginal and Islander organisation and interested people to prepare information and material for the forum discussions - Bob Adams.

4. That this conference implore the premier, Mr Goss, to prevent any further changes to the Division of Youth's placement in the interests of the stability of the whole youth affairs field. To inform him, it is the view of the field That, if a change must be made, it should only be into the premier's department because of the "umbrella" nature of youth issues and concerns across the various ministries - Bob Adams.

2. POLICY PROCESSES WORKSHOP

a) The document titled "Queensland Government Youth Policy" could be most accurately described as a statement of current government programmes and the rationale that underpins those programmes. The value of such a document as an aid in the policy development process was noted.

b) The Division of Youth and YANQ begin discussions on the process through which a Queensland Youth Affairs Policy should be developed. It was requested that the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland make known the preference of this meeting for a policy development process that emphasizes that principles of empowerment and consolation and adopts a developmental/educative focus.

c) These recommendations be delivered to both the Division of Youth and the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland.

MISCELLANEOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That greater use be made of interdepartmental working groups with representation from the community sector, with the aim of increasing the co-ordination between programmes administered by different departments which impact on specific groups.

2. It is recommended that a commitment be endorsed by YANQ at its first Policy Forum to develop an ACCESS and EQUITY POLICY that is culturally relevant to young women, with particular emphasis on the situation of Aboriginal and Islander and non-English speaking background young women's groups. (Only one person found this recommendation to be contentious.)



YOUNG PEOPLE, SEX AND YOU

1. That young people be given access to safe environments within all areas of education and youth services, to enable open and non-judgemental discussion of all aspects of sex, sexuality and relationships.
2. Within the context of advocating social justice for all young people, we recommend that all people who work with young people present positive images

WORKSHOP SUMMARIES

Maree Boyle

(The following are those that were submitted only)

AWARD COVERAGE. WAGES AND CONDITIONS FOR WORKERS IN THE YOUTH SECTOR

FACILITATOR: Amanda Ross, Australian Social Welfare Union (ASWU)

This workshop was concerned with the absence of award conditions in the Community Services Industry. The ASWU is currently struggling to have such conditions introduced. The workshop heard that the provision of reasonable conditions of employment is essential for community service workers and will be of ultimate benefit to the industry. Workshop participants noted the effects of the ASWU and urged all youth workers to support the same. Join the Union!!!

POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF CUSTODIAL CARE

FACILITATORS: Margaret Kerswell and Keith Rowden, Cleveleand Youth Centre, Townsville.

This workshop examined community interaction of young people in a secure custodial institution. The workshop noted the following points:

1. Secure residents need a greater degree of control in order to minimize the negativity of residing in a regionally structured institution.
2. Secure residents need to be able to choose and set their own goals and targets.
3. The primary purpose is to increase self esteem
4. Enabling staff - resident relationships are essential

YOUTH FROM A NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND. ARE WE SPEAKING THEIR LANGUAGE?

FACILITATOR: Athena Manolenus

This workshop addressed the needs of non English speaking background youth service users. The relevance of mainstream youth services to non English speaking background was raised as was the awareness of youth service providers of the particular needs of non English speaking background youth.

The need to develop policies and practices appropriate to non English speaking background service users and to recognize the cultural mix of users was noted. The need to ensure that young people remain connected to family was noted. The concept of bi-culturalism was explained and noted as a useful vehicle for working with non English speaking background youth.

IT'S NOT ALWAYS HAPPY AT MY HOUSE. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

FACILITATOR: Heather Nancarrow, Domestic Violence Resource Centre

This workshop examined the physical and psychological effects of Domestic violence on women and children (including teenagers). The workshop noted the significance of structural inequalities and gender stereotypes as causes in the domestic violence cycle. The role of perpetrators in eliminating future violence was noted.

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP OR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT?

FACILITATOR: Geoff Kapernick

This workshop discussed the issue of non-profit organisations exploring alternate and more effective methods of financing operations. This may involve a shift from a donation or grant based approach to the development of an entrepreneurial approach. An example of this is the formation of joint ventures with local firms.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF A SEXUAL KIND

FACILITATOR: Annette Powell, Family Planning Association of Queensland

This workshop examined the symptoms and treatment of STD's, effective methods of communication, and the clarification of values that may hinder the provision of assistance to young people. The workshop noted the desirability of behaviors based, as opposed to target group based, education programmes. The need for positive and empowering youth programmes was noted.

BUSKING IN HEALTH : GUERILLA TACTICS IN HEALTH PROMOTION/EDUCATION

FACILITATOR: Ben Norris, Drug Offensive Sunshine Coast

The appropriateness of BUSKING as a means of communication with street based young people was discussed. The usefulness of BUSKING in health promotion was demonstrated.

HIV WALKS INTO YOUR OFFICE

FACILITATOR: Andrew Watts, Queensland Aids Council

Issues of sex, sexuality and HIV/AIDS were discussed in relation to working with young people. Participants expressed disappointments at the absence of sexuality as a conference stream and agreed that the same be included at future conferences.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH IN THE RURAL SECTOR

FACILITATOR: Co-ordinator, Richmond Placement Scheme.

The presentation centered on rural employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged young men and women. The most successful training programmes in terms of employment outcomes are those where contracts are let to rural training providers accepted by rural industry.

INFORMATION FLOW ACROSS THE STATE : YOUTH SECTOR TRAINING COUNCIL (YSTC)

FACILITATOR: Pam Searle, Youth Sector Training Council

This workshop provided information about YSTC and sought advice on how best to ensure information flow across the state. The problem of developing sound information flow without duplicating existing resources was noted. The lack of knowledge of existing resources was also noted. It was suggested that a comprehensive list of youth services and youth issue newsletters be published.

AN INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR OFFENDING YOUTH

FACILITATOR: Roger Van der Veen, Department of Family Services Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Mackay

This workshop consisted of a presentation describing an intervention programme operating in Mackay. The programme is for provincial young offenders. The programme was researched in Mackay for the Department of Family Services. It is low cost and therefore feasible. When researching the programme interviews were held with young offenders and youth workers. A review of relevant literature was also carried out.

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland INAUGURAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Yeppoon Town Hall, Friday 16th November 1990

This meeting was a milestone in the development of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland. It was a public statement that YANQ was now under way and ready for action.

The meeting was chaired by Jane Follitt, Interim Steering Committee member.

Steering Committee Report - Bob Adams, Acting Chairperson.

Bob reported on the history of youth affairs in Queensland and of YANQ itself. His theme was one of "self interest destroys ... a community of mutual interest builds hope". In closing Bob noted that, due to other commitments he would not be re-nominating for a position on the Co-ordinating Committee.

Workers' Report - Georgina Warrington, Project Development Officer.

Georgina reported on the staffing difficulties of YANQ - 1.5 staff with a huge task to accomplish. She welcomed Peter Pearce to the staff as the Policy/Research Officer and noted that YANQ is still looking for an expert Administration/Communications Officer. Georgina is leaving in February to go overseas for several years.

The consultation process that YANQ followed was outlined, along with the observation that YANQ has had to change its focus due to the expanding role of the Division of Youth. Now YANQ has a working model which will need to be developed and improved over the next year.

Election of Co-ordinating Committee for 90/91.

The following Committee members were duly elected:

NAME	ORGANISATION
Jane Follitt	QUT Union
Karin Cheyne	Brisbane Rape Crisis Centre
Colleen Kelly	Catholic Youth
Phil Crane	QUT - Carseldine
Billy Gorham	Aboriginal & Islander Youth Program
Joan Hendriks	Kangaroo Point TAFE / Aboriginal & Islander Catholic Council
Rebecca Lister	Feral Arts

Eddie Mabo Aboriginal & Islander Youth Program
Donna Matulis Gold Coast Youth Service

Pam Searle Youth Sector Training Program

Financial Report - Karin Cheyne Interim Steering Committee member.

Karin reported that YANQ is in its second term of funding. A budget of \$160,000.00 was allocated by the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing, through the Division of Youth, amounting to twice last year's funding. This has resulted in a staff increase from 1.5 to 3.

Karin thanked the Director of the Division of Youth, Rod Lees and his staff for their consistent support and co-operation. She also thanked Bob Adams and Fusion Australia (YANQ's auspicing body) for their support.

The books and records of YANQ were audited by Ian West & Company.

YANQ is committed to sharing its resources and to this end, the Policy/Research Officer, Peter Pearce is spending time working with other groups in the community sector.

Question Time

No questions were raised.

Jane Follitt moved the following motion: "That the Constitution currently submitted to the Justice Department be extensively reviewed through a process of consultation with all members by a sub-committee of the Co-ordinating Committee with any recommended changes to be presented for consideration for changing the constitution at the next Annual General Meeting." Seconded by Pat Nixon. Carried unopposed.

Appointment of auditor.

It was resolved to appoint Peter Brough & Company to be the auditor for the 90/91 financial year.

Close of AGM

Phil Crane moved that the AGM officially thank the steering committee for its tireless efforts in pioneering YANQ; all the work carried out during the previous year and the work in organising the State Youth Affairs Conference. This motion was overwhelmingly supported.

PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

The following comments were mostly made at the final plenary session.

Recreation of young people not addressed at conference. lack of networking with Division of Sport and Racing.

Tried. Learnt a lot. Importance of including Aboriginal and Islander people in consultation. Pleased JAB represented.

Inspired. Broad cross-section building connections. Take away strong belief that divisions between government and non-government will be broken down..

Back that up. Great to see how far the relationships between government and non-government have developed. Hopeful for future.

Great to have been part of sexuality discussions. Hear another view.

Looking for common ground. Progress in people tightening up recommendations. Thinking more sharply. Encouraging lot of growth.

Learning to communicate in a language people understand - especially to communicate process stuff.

Excited. There's been a move from nebulous field to communicate and evidence of empathy and honesty about issues to do with race, gender, justice.

It proves how much more mature and developed the youth affairs sector is now.

Maybe we're getting to our late adolescence

As member of local community thanks for coming, exciting. It's even helped us in terms of shaping consciousness of the local council in terms of community involvement.

A lot of credibility locally because of having conference here.

Conference was great. I'm tired. I learnt a lot. Encouraged by energy and dedication. I'm really encouraged and excited.

The structure was good. Involving. small groups had power to be listened to but flexibility. Spot on.

I'd second that. Amazed at punctuality.

Ideal town for conference.

I was disappointed I didn't get to go to all the workshops. Like a kid in a candy store.

Thanks extended to Judith Riordan.

I thought it was a good mixture of work and play. Day off was a the right time. Good balance. A good mix.

I'm a government worker. The role play was accurate. Discussion went on after formal forums - more impact. Strategies have developed - encouraged. Delighted to have been here.

People have been accepting of our small church being here.

Relief. It's tangible and happening.

It's going somewhere. Feels inspiring.

Moved from blame to working out what we can do.

Moved from an "us" and "them" to co-operation.

History of youth affairs helped.

Al-A-Teen. Made lot of contacts. Never been involved in a conference like this before. Informative. Valuable. Need to focus on other issues in future on handicapped young people, victims of drug abuse etc.

I'm going to withdraw. It wasn't a hassle. I had a great time. No history of having conferences helped. Its been a great experience.

I've realised how much we have to learn from each other. We can achieve so much more working together.

Cross-fertilisation needs to continue beyond here now.

Are youth workers always so argumentative and opinionated?

CONFERENCE EVALUATION

Peter Pearce, Sue Shaw and Georgina Warrington.

The task of evaluating an activity such as the State Youth Affairs Conference is not as simple as it would at first seem. There are no empirical measures that demonstrate what constitutes a successful conference or similar activity. There is disagreement even among those who attended this conference as to what constitutes success. Some have commented on their dissatisfaction at failing to arrive at what they see as some discernible outcome. Others have noted the bold view that the State Youth Affairs Conference represents the 'coming of age' for youth affairs in Queensland. It is not possible to resolve such disparate views. One can only note that each holds some meaning for those who promote such views and that this disparity is a hallmark of the youth affairs field.

This report presents a collation of the views of those who attended the conference and who subsequently responded to the evaluation survey. The value that is placed on participant's subjective observations is left for the reader to decide.

A conference evaluation questionnaire was circulated to all conference participants in December 1990. Participants were asked a series of questions relating to pre-conference planning, logistics, conference programme, policy recommendations, registration and future conferences. Participants were asked to rate a variety of particular aspects of the conference on a standard rating scale where 1 represents dissatisfaction, 3 adequacy and 5 excellence. Space for specific comments was also provided. Finally, participants were asked to rate the conference over all, according to the standard scale. There was no expectation that participants should explain their views or provide a rationale for a particular criticism or comment.

A total of 289 questionnaires were distributed and 97 responses were received. This represents a response rate of 33.6% which is at the top of the range of what should be expected from an unsolicited survey of this type. Generally, it is possible to say that most respondents rated most aspects of the conference as being adequate to excellent. The conduct of the final conference plenary and the process employed for the formulation of policy recommendations were the most critically viewed aspects of the conference.

Pre-conference Planning

The vast majority of respondents found pre-conference planning to be in the range of adequate to excellent. In total, 97.9% of respondents believed that notification of the conference had been received early enough to make suitable plans. A total of 89.7% believed that information concerning the venue, dates and registration fees was received early enough to make suitable plans. A total of 92.8% believed that pre-conference information concerning the programme was in the range of adequate to excellent.

Some suggestions made for improving information on future events included :

Notification of level at which the conference is aimed.

Do not change dates.

Maintain the standard from this conference.

Invitations to conduct workshops etc should be more widely distributed.

Some of the more general comments included :

Probably better to print on a background colour that can be photocopied.

In total I received three programmes which I thought was somewhat excessive. Think of the trees.

Easy to understand. Quick reference.

Well produced.

Good. Very clear. Enabled me to plan which workshops I would attend.

Those who contributed the many hours necessary to produce, update and distribute pre-conference information might draw solace from the apparent overwhelming endorsement of their efforts.

Respondents received pre-conference information from the following sources:

Word of mouth	32.8%
Direct conference mail	31.2%
Youth Link Newsletter	17.6%
YANQ Newsletter	16.8%

The remaining 1.6% either received their information from other sources or did not respond to the relevant question.

Logistics

As with pre-conference planning the majority of respondents rated the logistical aspects of the conference in the adequate to excellent range. A small number of strong statements referring to the competence of the conference accommodation booking agent were received. Some equally strong statements concerning the suitability of transport arrangements from Brisbane were recorded. Some respondents also questioned the wisdom of not accommodating all participants at the one location (i.e. why not in a hotel, camp or college?).

Travel

In total 82.5% of respondents believed that arrangements for travel to the conference rated in the adequate to excellent range. Some 6.2% viewed these arrangements as less than adequate to poor and 11.3% failed to respond to the relevant question. The most common criticism was an inordinate delay or failure to collect from Rockhampton airport. As stated, transport from Brisbane caused concern and the adequacy of travel subsidy warranted mention.

Accommodation

The accommodation booking system was rated in the adequate to excellent range by 64.0% of respondents. Some 10.3% rated the system as less than adequate to poor and 25.7% failed to respond to the relevant question. The most common criticism referred to the competence of the booking agent.

When asked to rate the standard of accommodation, giving consideration to rates paid, 71.1% of respondents believed that the standard ranged from adequate to excellent. A total of 5.1% believed the standard rated less than adequate to poor and 23.8% did not respond to the relevant question.

Venue

When considering the preferred type of venue for any future conference the majority of respondents stated a preference for arrangements similar to those employed on this occasion. A residential conference where all participants are accommodated at the same place constituted the next most popular option. In all, preferences breakdown as follows:

Similar to Yeppoon	55.3%
Residential conference	18.7%
College/University	9.8%
Large hotel	16.5%
Camp	6.5%

The remainder either noted some other preference or did not respond.

Catering

Conference catering received a considerable endorsement from respondents. A total of 92.7% of respondents believed that the day time catering rated from adequate to excellent. No respondents rated this catering as poor while 6.2% believed it to be less than adequate. Ratings for evening catering arrangements are similar to those noted above. A total of 89.7% believed that evening catering arrangements were adequate to excellent and 3.1% believed them to be less than adequate to poor. The most common criticism of catering arrangements was the belief that vegetarians were not catered for adequately.

Social Program

The conference social programme was well received by the majority of respondents. When asked to rate the overall programme 93.8% believed it to be within the adequate to excellent range. No respondents believed it to be less than adequate or poor and 6.2% did not respond.

The social programme for specific evenings were rated as follows:

Day	less than adequate	adequate to excellent
Monday (bands, Streetwise launch)	1.0%	86.6%
Tuesday (conference dinner, DJ)	3.1%	84.5%
Wednesday (free night)	3.1%	80.4%
Thursday (Bush Dance)	4.2%	76.3%

In all cases the remainder are those who did not respond. The most common comment on the social programme noted the virtue of a free evening in the conference agenda. Others commented on the forms of entertainment with some stating a preference for more Jazz, Afro-Caribbean etc, etc. A final notable request is "Please, no more Bush Dances".

Conference Programme

Evaluation survey respondents seem generally satisfied with the conference programme, with some notable reservations. Participants were asked to respond to a series of question that related to the morning keynote sessions, morning work-

shops, afternoon workshops and the preparedness of presenters. All of these areas are viewed favourably by respondents.

Keynote sessions

All of the keynote sessions found favour with the majority of respondents. The breakdown of adequate to excellent ratings for the three keynote sessions is as follows :

Monday (Dr Ian O'Connor: People)	89.7%
Tuesday (Jill Jakel: Policy)	88.7%
Thursday (Role Play: Practice)	9.4%

The morning 'streamed sessions' were generally well received. A notable observation is that while 81.5% of respondents believed that these sessions rated in the adequate to excellent range, only 5.2% believed they warranted an excellent rating. A significant percentage of respondents (16.3%) believed that these sessions rated in the less than adequate to poor range. A similar observation can be noted in respondents views of the preparedness of session presenters. While 82.5% rated the same in the adequate to excellent range, only 6.2% viewed this aspect as excellent. Of equal note is the fact that 14.5% believed that this aspect rated in the less than adequate to poor range.

Some of the more notable comments registered with reference to morning workshops were :

Too much for too little time.

It was valuable to have the same people following the same stream.

Made all workers aware of the broad range of issues that exist in the field.

Groups were too large, time too limited and the information mundane.

Morning workshop streams

Each morning stream registered the following proportion of attendance as recorded by respondents :

Juvenile Justice	18.8%
Employment	17.0%
Community Development	12.7%
Health	9.6%
Rural Issues	9.2%
Education	9.2%
Aboriginal and Torres Islander Issues	7.9%
Accommodation	7.4%
Young Women's Issues	6.1%
Sexuality Issues	1.3%

The remainder failed to respond to this question. Please note that this is a distribution of respondents, not of conference participants.

Afternoon workshops

The afternoon workshops were well received by respondents. A total of 91.8% believed that the range of workshops rated in the adequate to excellent range. No respondent rated the range as poor. A common comment was "too many options" or "so many I could not choose".

Overall, the majority of respondents believed that these workshops satisfied their needs. Respondents ranked the workshop process as providing opportunities for various means of interaction as follows :

Participation	23.6%
Discussion	24.2%
Experiential learning	14.5%
Information sharing	20.6%
Creativity	13.0%

Overall, 87.5% of respondents rated the afternoon workshops as adequate to excellent.

Workshops at future conferences

Respondents noted the following preferences for the arrangement of workshops at future conferences :

Offer as broad a range of workshops as possible	47.7%
Call for offers and select a small number	20.7%
Offer a small number and repeat each day	11.7%
Offer a narrow range on specific issues	8.1%
Accept all offers of workshops	3.6%

It is worth noting that these preferences are about evenly split between options that mirror the arrangements employed at Yeppoon and others that suggest a more specific and restricted approach.

Policy Recommendations

The formulation and presentation of policy recommendations and the conduct of conference plenary sessions are the two aspects of the conference viewed most critically by respondents. It is evident from both the ratings and comments provided that both fell short of what a significant proportion of respondents believed desirable. While noting this dissatisfaction, it is important to note that a majority of respondents did rate the policy formulation process and the plenary in the adequate to excellent range. These were rated as such by 63.9% and 51.5% respectively. A total of 32% and 34% respectively believed that these aspects rated in the less than adequate to poor range. This constitutes a significant proportion when compared to other aspects evaluated. Some typical comments were : "too much to deal with in insufficient time"; "overly democratic"; "too many people and no time for

discussion"; "good process, democratic informative"; "often had to limit discussion to meet policy formulation requirements"; and "difficult to prioritize to only two issues". A significant number of respondents registered the view that the afternoon plenary sessions made the day too long and that it was unreasonable to expect participants to work at 3.30pm.

The role of the policy group found favour with a majority of respondents. A total of 75.2% rated the policy group's efforts in the adequate to excellent range. A significant proportion (14.4%) rated the same as less than adequate to poor. A broad range of comments were received. Some were most complimentary while others were clearly critical. Two typical examples are: "Good work. A difficult job in difficult circumstances" and "Too much personal politicking. Recommendations reflected the views of the policy group".

Registration

In all, 92.7% of respondents believed the registration fee to be in the adequate to excellent range. The tiered structure for registration where rates varied for government, community and low wage-earners was viewed equally favourably by 85.6% of respondents. This arrangement did draw the comment that such a structure risks devaluing the contribution of government workers and that "you should not assume that all government departments are wealthy". A convincing 91.8% of respondents believed that the conference represented good value for money.

Future Conferences

Participants responded as follows to the question "I think a statewide conference should be held:

Each year	42.7%
Every two years with a regional event in between	30.0%
Every two years	22.7%

There are a number of locations that are clearly popular suggested venues for future conferences. Respondents noted the following list of preferred locations:

Yeppoon	8.4%
Cairns	17.8%
Hervey Bay	17.3%
Sunshine Coast	13.5%
Mt. Isa	9.2%
Toowoomba	8.6%
Gold Coast	3.8%
Townsville	2.2%
Magnetic Island/Mackay (each)	1.1%
Roma/Charleville/Longreach/ Brisbane (each)	0.5%

The remainder either stated that location makes no difference or did not respond.

As a final comment respondents were asked to mention the favourable aspects of the overall conference, to make general suggestions for future improvements and to provide an overall rating for the conference. The most frequent favourable comment was that the conference provided opportunities for networking. The social programme also warranted frequent mention. Critical comments included the view that many facilitators were ill-prepared; that the accommodation arrangements hindered greater networking; and that the conference produced no clear outcome. Suggestions for future improvements ranged from maintaining the present standard through to adopting a more business-like approach in future.

The breakdown of overall ratings for the conference as provided by respondents is as follows:

Excellent	39.2%
Adequate to Excellent	36.1%
Adequate	13.4%
Less than Adequate	4.1%
Poor	00.0%
No response	7.2%

As a final comment, all should note that all of the various aspects of the conference upon which respondents commented were rated in the adequate to excellent range by a majority of respondents. This was so in every instance. It is clear that some aspects were less favourably viewed than others but that the conference was well received overall. The closing comment is reserved for that worker who was attending her first youth affairs event of any magnitude. Her question was:

Are youth workers always so self-opinionated and aggressive?



Rebecca helping Richard deal with his aggression during their performance, Monday afternoon plenary.

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