

The Journal of  
the Youth Affairs  
Network of Qld Inc

VOL 1 NO 3  
September 1991

# transitions

Registered by Australia Post Publication No. QAW 0031



The Journal of  
the Youth Affairs  
Network of Qld Inc

VOL 1 NO 3  
September 1991

# transitions

## Contents

<b>Trying to Get my Act Together ... Just can't Find Anywhere to Do It</b> The Experience of Homelessness Amongst Young Women with Children KARYN WALSH	3
<b>From Recreation to Welfare</b> Where to now? SUZI QUIXLEY	8
<b>The New Federalism</b> A Can of Worms for Community Services? MARTIN ATTRIDGE	13
<b>Developing Regional Responses to Youth Homelessness</b> The Use of Research and Consultation as Complementary Strategies MANDY NIELSEN and PHIL CRANE	18
<b>Is Work Experience Really Working?</b> Challenging the Values of Work Experience for Intellectually Disabled Students GREGORY LEWIS and SUSAN ROBERTSON	22
<b>All This and More</b> Analysis and Practice in Youth Work JENNY GILMORE	27
<b>Research Updates</b>	31
<b>Core Curriculum Development Project</b> A New Approach to Youth Sector Training CHRIS BROWN	32
<b>Towards an Integrated Policy Position</b> YACA Discussion Paper LIZ DAVIES	37



# transitions

## Editorial Committee

Bob Adams  
Phil Crane  
Ian O'Connor  
Rita Riedel  
Clare Tilbury

## Additional Editorial

Lindsay Granger  
Corrie Macdonald

## Desktop Publishing

Rita Riedel

## Cartoons

Ken Butler  
Jane Harty  
Troy Matheson  
Will Stubbs

## Photographs

Photo Language Australia

## YANQ COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Jane Folliott  
Secretary: Colleen Kelly  
Phil Crane  
Helen Ferguson  
Billy Gorham  
Joan Hendriks  
Rebecca Lister  
Eddie Mabo  
Donna Matulis  
Pam Searle

## STAFF

Network Development Coordinator  
Lindsay Granger

Policy/Research Officer  
Corrie Macdonald

Communications/Administration Officer  
Rita Riedel

## editorial

Welcome to our third edition of *Transitions*. As YANQ's membership continues to grow and workers in Queensland's youth sector become aware of the services offered by the Network, so too *Transitions* is being recognised as a valuable resource for the distribution of information relevant to youth service providers throughout Queensland.

In this issue we feature a number of topical articles. Locally, we discover the experiences of homelessness amongst young women with children in the Brisbane metropolitan area and the needs of homeless young people in the Gold Coast region. Interstate, contributors explore the origins and future direction of youthwork and critically examine strategies adopted in the transition of intellectually disabled students into open employment. Federally, we uncover a can of worms opened by the new federalism and outline the Federation of Youth Sector Training Council's *Core Curriculum Development Project* designed to meet the future training needs of youth workers ..... and there's more.

In a continued effort to provide up-to-date information to the Queensland youth sector a decision has been made to increase the frequency of YANQ's Newsletter distribution from quarterly to bimonthly in 1992. At the same time the number of *Transitions* editions will be reduced from four to three. It is envisaged that with only three editions per year we will be able to present our members with a more exciting, comprehensive and challenging journal. We intend to maintain an accessible style that will make all *Transitions* editions enjoyable to read.

Our next issue in February 1992 will be the first on a specific theme. It will look at issues affecting young women in Queensland today.

### ***Transitions* is published by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc.**

The journal is intended as an open forum. Therefore the views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the Network or the members of the Editorial Committee.

### **Address for Correspondence**

YOUTH AFFAIRS NETWORK OF QUEENSLAND  
PO Box 116  
Fortitude Valley Qld 4006  
Telephone: (07) 852 1800 (008) 177899  
Facsimile: (07) 852 1441

# TRYING TO GET MY ACT TOGETHER ... JUST CAN'T FIND ANYWHERE TO DO IT

## The Experience of Homelessness Amongst Young Women with Children

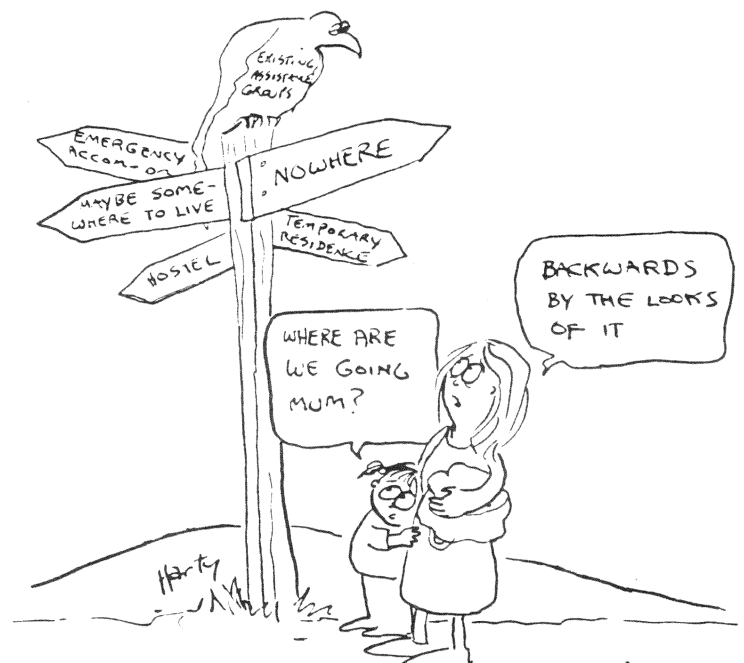
KARYN WALSH

*Young women who are giving birth to children during their own adolescence have attracted the interest of several professional disciplines: the fields of social work, sociology, psychology, adolescent health, maternal and child health, obstetrics, midwifery and psychiatry have all developed views on what is often referred to as **teenage pregnancy**. In general, however, what characterises most of these approaches is their focus upon this phenomenon as a **problem**. When pregnancy or parenting involves young women who are also homeless, then this is even more the case.*

### INTRODUCTION

This article describes some aspects of a research project which sought to explore how adolescent families experienced homelessness from *their* perspective, rather than testing or applying a particular conceptual framework. The project attempted to examine their experiences, so as to identify the contributing factors that lead to a vulnerability in young women's capacity to parent their children.

It has been the intention of this research not to focus only upon the experiences of pregnancy and parenting for young homeless women but also to explore the context in which these experiences were being lived from day to day. This involved looking at how the young women perceived their life and the changes required to accommodate their experience of pregnancy and parenting. It was also important to consider how their interactions with others assisted or hindered their ability to remain committed to a decision to continue a pregnancy and/or parent a child.





## BACKGROUND

The research project was developed by the Social Work Practice Centre (University of Queensland) and funded through the Queensland Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse.

In the course of the project, the researcher developed links with young women through existing services. As a result, there was direct contact with 27 young women who participated in group or individual discussions. In addition, the research drew upon the work of the Brisbane Youth Service Family Project which had intense contact with a further 24 young women. Relationships between the researcher and young women varied from one month to twelve months and at times the researcher was involved in direct service delivery which continued until young women were linked to appropriate support services. Alongside of direct contact with young women, the researcher interviewed a range of workers in Brisbane-based services dealing with young parents and participated in a number of interagency discussions of issues relevant to young parents.

In terms of defining "homelessness", the research project has drawn upon Watson (1986) and the work of the National Youth Coalition for Housing (1985). Both of these approaches seek to provide a broad perspective on what constitutes homelessness. In addition, the recent work of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (1989) also provided a reference point for understanding homelessness amongst young people. The definition adopted by the HREOC's National Inquiry into Homeless Children referred to homelessness as:

*lack of shelter that is permanent, adequate and secure and a vulnerability, as a result both of this lack of shelter and of the lifestyle it imposes, to exploitation and abuse.* (1989: 43).

This definition was considered to be useful and worthwhile because of its focus upon issues of lifestyle and vulnerability and the relationship between these issues and a lack of shelter.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

The image of homelessness for the young women who participated in this research was that of "street kids". Fifteen of the 27 women who were contacted reflected on their experience of homelessness prior to having children, and then it was more a description of their lifestyle rather than them identifying themselves as being homeless:

*I used to rage and just sleep wherever I ended up!*

*I was a real street kid. I lived it up at discos, got into trouble with cops; squatted at the Cross; and moved around from town to town with my boyfriend until I had my first baby.*

*Sometimes I got bored but it certainly looks exciting now ... I just sit in front of the TV and do what I have to do in between the soaps.*

*What I didn't like ... I just got up and left behind.*

They therefore didn't describe their present situation as one of homelessness because they, for the sake of their children, stayed in a house, a caravan, a shelter, or with friends, for much longer than they would have endured as young women without dependents. Even when circumstances were difficult and sometimes potentially harmful to themselves and their children they forced themselves to stay rather than forego having a place to stay with children. Being on the street with their children was obviously not acceptable and that would identify them as homeless, which to the young women was worse than the circumstances they were enduring.

One young woman aged 17 years with a ten month old child described her situation at the time of contact as "it's better than nowhere". Immediately after the birth of her child she was forced to move from her foster mother's home. After finding a place with a friend, who also had a child, she and her child moved due to conflicts about the children. Subsequently she contacted a hospital social worker and was referred to emergency accommodation for three months. Her analysis of the previous twelve months was:

*You can't cart a kid around all the time ... I try to stay put for as long as I can stand it.*

Her preferred choice would have been public housing if she had been able to apply.

Having a child changed the perception of homelessness for these young women. Those who had experienced difficulty in finding suitable accommodation prior to having children had experienced homelessness as a way of escaping their parental home, which they described on many occasions as being unbearable due to domestic violence, alcohol, physical and/or sexual abuse. However, now having the responsibility of a child,

their capacity to "get out" of inappropriate living arrangements was considerably more hindered. This was particularly so due to their lack of connection to supportive social networks and their inability to access resources, especially public housing.

### OVERCOMING HOMELESSNESS ... OR BEING OVERCOME BY IT?

For these young women, overcoming the experience of homelessness was centred on attempting to create a home for their own family unit. The lack of resources both within themselves and the community, as well as the absence of effective networks of social relationships, were the dominant factors influencing the success or failure of their attempts to do so. This can be illustrated in the experience of a young woman, aged 21 years, with a mild intellectual disability who was the parent of a ten month old child.

As a child growing up in her family home the young woman was regularly physically abused by her mother. The intervention of the Department of Family Services led to her being placed in several foster homes, with periodic spaces of time back with her family. Once she turned 18 her options of living anywhere but her parental home were limited. When she fell pregnant this was even more cause for her to stay at home. However, her mother continued to physically abuse her during her pregnancy, and consequently the child was born prematurely. The young woman did not disclose to anyone about her mother's physical abuse because of her fear about coping with the baby on her own. On discharge after the birth of her child she returned home where the mother dominated her and would not allow her to care for the baby. Instead, her child was physically abused by its grandmother. This led to the young woman to seek help from the Department of Family Services.

*I never wanted to be there, but where else could I go ... I knew nothing about babies ... but I snapped when she hit my baby and couldn't stand it any longer ... I had to get out for her sake ... I regret not getting out earlier.*

The need for this young woman to have access to supported but independent housing was obvious. Unfortunately, with resources as they stand, young women's housing needs are enmeshed with their parent-child relationship. This contributes to locking them into a cycle of needing emergency accommodation due to the complete lack of any alternative supported accommodation. There are no services which allow young pregnant women to establish themselves with both a degree of

independence and support and then maintain the accommodation after the birth of their baby. Being forced to move because of the criteria of services prevents women from dealing with the major issues and decisions they are faced with by pregnancy and parenthood.

One young woman aged 16, with a three week old newborn baby, had stayed with friends during her pregnancy. In between she had been at youth shelters and had no permanent address. Immediately prior to having the child she was residing in an accommodation facility that did not give her the option to return with the baby. Her description of events is as follows:

*... but I had nowhere to go once I had a baby ... anywhere I tried to think about staying or I liked for some reason wasn't possible with a baby too! I would have liked to go back to my foster Mum's ... but they don't want or just don't have room for both of us ... that's why I was going to adopt ... but I couldn't look the baby in the eye and say I didn't want it ...".*

In order to parent her child herself the young woman had little control over where she could be placed. She had to get to a resource where she could learn the skills necessary to care for the baby and as a result perceived herself "to be watched". The experience

---

**There are no services which allow pregnant young women to establish themselves with both a degree of independence and support and then maintain the accommodation after the birth of their baby.**

---

was too intense and she relinquished the child for adoption to access an accommodation service with which she was familiar but which had no provision for children. For her, this "took the pressure off for a while". She subsequently changed arrangements with Family Services from adoption to foster-care, with the understanding that she would find suitable accommodation with a family or independently. Once again, the dilemma emerged where the social networks available and familiar to her were not available and appropriate for her child. With the commitment of a worker in Family Services she did establish herself independently in a flat and parented her child for a short period of time before she was evicted.



It was difficult to envisage breaking her cycle of homelessness because there are no services which can give young women the amount and type of support they need to develop skills in both independent living and parenting, whilst also accepting and responding to the particular characteristics of an adolescent lifestyle.

This was further demonstrated by the comment of a young woman aged 18 years, whose child was in foster-care due to the intervention of Family Services after a notification of child abuse. She was residing in emergency accommodation.

*I'm trying to get my act together ... I just can't find anywhere to do it ... but when I do I get my daughter back.*

Another young woman aged 19 years with a toddler of twenty months, was having difficulty maintaining a relationship, rent and engaging in full-time parenting responsibilities. On reflecting upon her previous lifestyle of homelessness, she described it as:

*... looking good ... I can't hack any more responsibility ... I don't know what I want ... I just want to be free again.*

She decided not to maintain being a full-time parent, made alternative arrangements and "returned" as she said, to a street-lifestyle.

## HOMELESSNESS AND OTHER ISSUES

When young women described situations of domestic violence, they were unaware of services which would have allowed themselves and their children a safe and secure place to stay. These young women were often forced or chose to move regularly due to the nature of their relationships. They were particularly vulnerable to interventions from a number of Government agencies, including Department of Social Security, Department of Family Services and, if in public housing, the Department of Housing and Local Government. Interventions from these government agencies were often initiated as a result of anonymous calls.

A major issue around which outside intervention focused was young women's relationships to their partners. Many women found the guidelines by which they were asked to describe the nature of their relationships with male partners to be inappropriate and not flexible enough to reflect where they were at with these relationships. For example, in order to maintain an independent income (from Social Security) women were forced to hide a relationship with a male partner. Some women, in order not to draw attention to themselves, would choose to move regularly.

It was not only young women's housing that was disrupted due to their regularly moving but also their parenting. One young woman lost access visits for a period of time due to being evicted as a result of damage from outbursts of violence by her partner and another was unable to access Housing Commission services because of debts that were incurred by her partner through the bond scheme. The latter particularly lacked the confidence to access any women's shelter because she saw that she was "too young" and "hated them when I was a kid so I don't want to go back".

It can be seen by some of the comments and descriptions that for some young parents their



homelessness became a child-protection issue. This at times was compounded by the way in which young women themselves had perceived the Department of Family Service's intervention in their own childhood.

A young woman 16 years old and nine months pregnant, was identified on admission to hospital six weeks prior as homeless, because no residence that she considered appropriate was approved by the Department of Family Services to be a safe and proper environment for a newborn baby. She was automatically referred to SCAN when the baby was born and was placed in accommodation that was acceptable to the Department but not to her. She cooperated for a short period of

### **... young women did not perceive their pregnancy or their choice to parent as a "problem" ...**

time and then left without consent from the Department to stay with her boyfriend, again for only a short of period of time, before she left with the baby without any explanation. As a child she had been subject to intervention from SCAN due to an allegation of abuse. This matter had not been resolved and she had no trust in the Department of Family Services or the decision making process embarked upon through SCAN. This directly contributed to her homelessness, which for her was a means of "making a break" and "getting away so they can't get at me".

However, from whatever perspective the different experiences of homelessness emerged for the young women, all except two women identified housing as their most urgent need. The two who had accessed secure and permanent housing identified it as a major factor in their ability to focus on the development of their parent-child relationship. This was aptly expressed by one young woman who had been evicted when she was eight months pregnant with her third child, and caring for a three year old and twenty month old:

*Fucking Housing Commission should get its finger out and do something real for all us women.*

This woman was due to move out of emergency accommodation and into a Housing Commission flat but wasn't looking forward to it and expected it probably wouldn't last.

### **CONCLUSION**

It was remarkable that for adolescent families who were functioning without access to permanent, secure

and adequate shelter, and without access to supportive and nurturing networks of people, attention was attracted from authorities and the community because of concerns about the parent/child relationship. Instead, what was really required was a broader focus, one which centred the parent/child relationship in a context which acknowledges young people's (including young parents') *right* to housing, income security, childcare, adequate health services and education, which are all major contributors to any person's ability to develop significant and meaningful relationships, and in particular, to foster positive outcomes for a parent/child relationship.

So often the young women's vulnerability was assessed through how they expressed their relationship with their child/children and not seen as a combination of major personal and social difficulties resulting from the lack of basic human resources that are required for any person to develop as a parent or individual in our society.

The other side of this equation is that the young women did not perceive their pregnancy or their choice to parent as a "problem". Nor did they specifically identify themselves as being "homeless". Yet this lifestyle and their lack of access to appropriate supports exposed their vulnerability as they struggled to deal with the implications of being a parent and being without permanent, adequate and secure shelter.

In general, these young women do not know their rights and entitlements and even when they do, will not easily claim them. This was particularly due to the fact that, in order to receive support, they were required to explain their circumstances in terms with which they were unfamiliar and which did not do justice to the reality of their daily lives. A major implication of this is that the development and nature of support services of these young women must be informed by a greater understanding of their lifestyle and experiences.

### **REFERENCES**

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, (1989) Our Homeless Children: Report of the National Inquiry into Homeless Children, Canberra: AGPS.
- NYCH, (1985) National Policies, St Kilda.
- Watson, S. (1986) Housing and Homelessness: A Feminist Perspective, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Karyn Walsh is a trained nurse and has worked as a youth worker for seven years. In that time she helped establish the Rockhampton Youth Service and Kedron Lodge. Karyn is now an active parent interested in young women's issues.



# from recreation to welfare:

## WHERE TO NOW?

SUZI QUIXLEY

*...Joan of Arc had a 'short, sharp, shiny' career - she was burnt at the stake at age 19.*

*...The poet, Thomas Chatterton, had completed his life's work when he suicided at 17.*

*... At 24, Martin Luther was a full professor.*

(Heer in Westhorp, 1990: 18).

The idea that there is a stage in life called 'youth' or 'adolescence' is a fairly Western, culturally-specific, recent one. In fact, it was only in the mid to late nineteenth century that the notion of 'adolescence' was established in Australia ... that the idea of a 'generation gap' really started.

Gill Westhorp, in her excellent paper *The History and Development of Youth Work in Australia* (1990) outlines four main phases in the development of work with young people. It is interesting that both a 'welfare' and a 'recreation' focus have existed in work with young people, from the outset.

During the mid to late nineteenth century, two streams of 'child saving' activity were central to work with young people (ibid: 4). Most of the workers with young people were middle or upper class; most of the

youth with whom they worked were working class. At best, these young people were seen as lazy or irresponsible, and at worst, as vicious and dangerous.

The forerunner of 'welfare' services for young people constituted one of these streams. It was considered that a key problem was the environment in which young people who were neglected and/or criminal lived, and that this was a key cause of 'their problems'. Philanthropic workers saw their goal as removal of young people from 'destructive' environments and relocating them in a more 'edifying' setting. Throughout this phase, priority was variously placed on moving working class young people to institutional settings (eg. reform schools), or placing them with 'good' families. It wasn't until the 1970's that any serious analysis of the impact of State intervention into the living environment of young people was undertaken, and removal of young people from their familiar environment became a last, rather than a first, option (ibid: 5).

Early youth 'recreation' services, too, began before the turn of the century. The predecessors of voluntary youth organisations were concerned with the provision of education and 'wholesome activities' for Anglo-saxon young people still living in their class setting. The focus of such services was on 'moral' and 'mental' advancement - militarism, discipline and

patriotism were frequently central to their functioning. Young men and women were always catered for in separate organisations, and gender role socialisation was a feature of these organisations priorities. According to Heer, they were essentially conservative, and aimed to

*harness the idealism of the young for purification and preservation of existing values.*

(in Westhorp, 1990: 7)

Both aspects of 'child saving' had one characteristic in common - they saw the newly constructed stage of 'youth' as having more in common with children than with adults. The notion of 'youth' is still used as a means of artificially prolonging childhood. Young people needed to be controlled and directed into paths. In the case of welfare programs, this was through reparation for the 'damage' already done to the young person; with recreation programs, the focus was more 'preventative'.

The second major phase in the development of youth affairs in Australia came with the Great Depression. During the 1920s and 1930s, significant social and service trends were concerned with provision of vocational education for young people. For the first time, universal education was embraced as a social priority and Anglo young people were encouraged to continue at school to age 15 and, if possible, beyond. Within both schools and the community, agencies prioritised vocational guidance. Both these trends were primarily targeted at keeping young people occupied at a time when employment was scarce. Those already unemployed were dealt with in a similar manner, with programs providing job placements, further education, recreational activities

and training placements in industry. The similarity of the social response to high unemployment in the 1930s and the last 15 years cannot be ignored ... even to the extent of preoccupation with the school leaving age!

The 1940s to 1960s were an economically stable period for much of the Australian population. Australia enjoyed a luxury not previously experienced across a significant proportion of the population - financial security - and hence the option of being concerned with quality of life rather than just survival. This was reflected in youth organisations, which focussed almost exclusively on recreation during this period. Youth organisations sought to 'keep up with the times' and offered a wider breadth of program options than at any other time. Creativity in programming (to a certain extent!) was valued and encouraged. Yet, many young people moved away from involvement in structured youth organisations.

It was during the 1960s that a new type of youth movement was acknowledged ... that is, one initiated and managed by young people themselves. Often these movements operated outside the accepted conservatism of the time. Overtly, and covertly, each was concerned with 'social change' of one type or another. We think of the sixties as a completely new era in youth affairs. It is very possible that some of the 'larrikin groups' of the 1800s were, in fact, seeking to fulfil the same function. However, the latter were predominantly working class and had little social power or credibility. They were outside the 'dominant culture'. They were considered an aberration ... an insult to morality. What was new about the social change movements of the 1960s was their middle class membership. It was the children of





the normative group within society who were actively seeking change.

And so, to the current phase of youth affairs, which commenced with huge injections of government funding during the 1970s.

... There's "nothing new under the sun"!

Just like the 1930s, the current era of youth organisations came about as a result of increasing unemployment. Arguably, the social response to unemployment has been little different to the earlier attempt to respond to the problem. Promotion of the work ethic as essential to 'responsible living', an emphasis upon programs designed to socialise young people into this ethic in the absence of employment, occupation of young people's time with programs designed to leave 'no time for mischief' and welfare provision intended to (just!) meet survival needs (with no provision for quality of life) have been key features of the programmatic response to youth unemployment.

The social change component to the field, too, has remained. It is reflected in the 'rights' focus of many youth affairs coordinating bodies nationwide, in some specific programs (albeit more frequently underfunded than others) such as youth advocacy services, and in

---

**At best, these young people were seen as lazy or irresponsible, and at worst, as vicious and dangerous.**

---

the working values of many individual youth workers. At a more subtle level, it is reflected in the large number of young people actively involved with social movements such as the peace movement, the land rights movement and environmental organisations.

So ... the current era of youth affairs is an amalgam of features of the history of youth affairs. Throughout the fields of youth, social and community services we see frequent reflections of bygone eras. We have seen the similarity between responses to high youth unemployment in the 1930s and 1980s.

Arguably, the 1850s to 1980s attitude to the predominance of environment in individual development has been central to the 'child saving' strategies applied to Aboriginal children until quite recently. Some would argue that the criteria for selection of foster parents have not changed at a qualitative level since the 1870s. Most youth affairs services target the 'most disadvantaged' ... that is, those with the least economic power in our society.

Yet, most youth workers are tertiary educated and relatively financially secure.

Historically, both 'welfare' and 'recreation' approaches to working with young people were based on a number of unquestioned assumptions:

- \* *that what was currently 'normal' was 'good' or 'right';*
- \* *that 'youth' is a volatile stage of life, requiring social allocation of resources to keep 'adolescents' on the 'straight and narrow' until they are safely 'adult';*
- \* *that 'adulthood' is attained once someone can show a level of adherence to the current social norms (eg. employment, marriage);*
- \* *that behaviour not consistent with social norms should be disciplined or 'pulled into line' as soon as possible (that is, that social values should be imposed);*
- \* *that population groups with potential to threaten the social norms should have their time filled to distract them from engaging in 'unacceptable' activities, and be encouraged to learn/accept social values;*
- \* *that deviations from social norms are a matter of individual pathology (weakness/inability/lack of knowledge) therefore programs should aim to treat/reform individuals.*

Clearly, there are some incongruities between these assumptions. For example, how can something be *absolutely* 'right' or 'wrong', when different behaviours are judged differently at different points in history? If deviation is an individual matter, then why have recreation programs, in particular, been proactively targeted at particular population groups? Is 'youth' really an identifiable stage in life, when it can vary so widely in the ages it covers according to other social factors (eg. young single parents are generally not targeted within youth affairs regardless of their age; most 'youth programs' do not cater for employed young people)? Should we take the poetry of Chatterton or the achievements of Joan of Arc or Martin Luther seriously ... surely they didn't have the maturity to really judge their output!

It all seems so obvious now! It's easy to look back at youth programs of the past and criticise the weaknesses in the assumptions that lay behind them. It's simple to see that in the nineteenth century orphaned 'children' had 'no option' but to steal to survive, given that the State took little or no responsibility for their support. It was logical and reasonable for such



In working with young people we must analyse issues from a social, cultural and economic perspective, as well as from a purely individual one.

groups of young people to work as groups rather than alone - it was more efficient and provided emotional and practical support. It would appear quite reasonable to believe that their poverty resulted from the social circumstances in which they found themselves, rather than in individual moral degeneracy, lack of ability or lack of will to live a 'good' life. Similarly, the Depression is widely accepted as an economic phenomenon. Most would now accept that an inability to find work at that time related to a lack of jobs, rather than individuals' lack of skills/experience/motivation.

Yet, it would seem to me that we run the risk of repeating the same mistakes ... of acting on incongruous assumptions without examining them. I recently undertook a study of homeless under 16 year olds in South Australia. Amongst my findings was the fact that around 75% of these young people had an income they controlled of less than \$10 per week, and over 90% had less than \$20. The only young people with over \$100 per week income were single parents or employed (ie. they were, arguably, socially considered 'adult'). Whilst Youth Shelters were available to a few of these young people, the formal options provided by the State were limited to foster parent (or similar) arrangements and institutionally-oriented services.

Generally, streetwork funding targeted at this group is provided with the aim of 'getting kids off the street'. Structurally, the 'non-street' options available to them are little different to the offerings of the latter part of the nineteenth century. Most work with the group is on an individual basis, with a focus on dealing with individual 'weaknesses' - crime, drug abuse or social skills. This focus on individual behaviour seems to ignore some of the things we know about youth homelessness - for example, the

finding of one of the Burdekin studies showed that 75% of homeless young women had been abused. The trends in programs for the unemployed since the mid 1970s have taken a similar path - that is, of examining individual 'weaknesses' rather than acknowledging social/economic factors. During the 1970s the unemployed were predominantly socially depicted as lazy - the 'dole bludger' syndrome. Programs centred on social involvement. The 1980s brought a new image of the unemployed - as inadequately trained - and with it, a plethora of training programs. Certainly, the latter appears a more sympathetic image, but it fundamentally adheres to the same line as that taken in the 1930s, that is, that unemployment is essentially a result of individual weakness of inability. This approach would seem to deny all the evidence to the contrary ... including periods over the past 15 years where unemployment rates have been as high as during the Great Depression.

## WHERE TO NOW?

If one lesson emerges from the past, it is this ... that we must look at the 'youth problem' in a balanced way. We must 'analyse' issues from a social, cultural and economic perspective, as well as from a purely individual one. We must have a 'picture' of what we are trying to achieve, rather than simply reacting to human pain/need in an immediate way, from moment to moment. We must have a considered 'strategy' of which our day to day work is a part ... otherwise we are liable to react to contradictory social messages as we receive them. We must come to conclusions, both individually and as groups of workers with young people, as to what are 'good' social values, since our answers to this question will inevitably determine our day to day interactions with young people. We must

explore new ways of working which provide alternatives to the 'treatment' or 'reform' of individual young people.

So what of 'welfare'? Welfare services have played a critical role in the lives of young people for over a century. They have alleviated a lot of individual suffering. Yet the problems they sought to respond to continue unabated. They have actively supported (both directly and subtly) the 'blame the victim' mentality widely held within the population. An alternative to this approach is a 'human rights' one. This perspective is premised on the belief that humans have not only a 'right' to survival ... but more than that, to some quality of life and influence over their future. In this context, welfare provision is little more than a starting point.

A worker with young people operating from a 'rights' perspective would be concerned with challenging the individual's assumption that they should be 'thankful' for such provision. They would be concerned with advocating the rights of young people (and, in fact, all people) to more than mere survival. They would be concerned with seeking to empower young people as a social group to act on their rights. They would be encouraging young people to seek quality of life and to look to the future in which they would like to live.

Whilst 'recreation' can act as a simple 'time filler', services can contribute significantly to a balanced approach to work with young people through focussing on quality of life at a range of all levels, and providing young people with skills which equip them to envisage a better future. Opportunities to explore their potential, to express creativity, to develop lateral thinking and to experience power and responsibility can all contribute to young people's ability to seek more than mere survival in their lives - both individually and as a group.

If we are to move 'forward', we must know where we seek to go. We must develop the vision, analysis and strategies needed before we have any chance of achieving our goals (or, even heading consistently toward them). We need to clearly identify our beliefs, and look at how they do/could impact on our practice. We need to be able to judge our own consistency, and be brutal with ourselves in deciding whether we have the impact which we intend.

When I say 'we' here, I am talking on two levels. Certainly, each individual worker needs to go through a clear personal process of identifying their own vision analysis and strategy (ie their ideology) which in turn informs their ethics and standards). Many have already done this, and are working along particular paths toward their own defined goals. The problem is some of these paths are quite different.

Many have not gone through this process and are staggering drunkenly in all directions, according to the particular programs/people presenting before them at the time. Others are unquestioningly following the path considered by society to be 'normal' at the moment. We haven't explored our common ground and differences as a group of people working with young people, in any concerted fashion.

I am not suggesting that going through this process of exploration, both individually and collectively, would magically result in a field with common purpose and direction. However, I do believe that our chances of developing cooperative ways of working together would be vastly improved if based on a thoughtful, rather than reactive, approach to work with young people. We would 'know' the extent to which we shared paths with different people/agencies. We would be able to share the work of heading toward common goals more effectively. We would enjoy a greater chance of achieving long-term change to the advantage of this, and later, generations of young people.

We can avoid some of the mistakes of the past if we seek, as a group, better ways of responding to youth needs at ALL levels - the short and long term, the individual and the social/economic/cultural. We can only achieve this 'balance' if we step back and consider where we want to go, both individually and collectively.

Where to now? Wherever we want to go!

## REFERENCES

- Heer, F. (1974) Revolutions of Our Time: The Challenge of Youth, London: Weiderfeld and Nicolson.
- Quixley, S. and Westhorp, G. (1985), Youth Workers' Access to the Field, Adelaide: Accreditation Working Party of SA.
- Quixley, S. (1990) Whose "Children"? A Study of Homeless Under 16's, Adelaide: Youth Housing Network.
- Westhorp, G. (1990), The History and Development of Youth Work in Australia, Occasional Paper, Adelaide: Youth Sector Training Council of SA.

Suzi Quixley is a freelance worker in the youth sector involved in research, training, writing and relief work. She has previously worked as a Lecturer in Community and Behavioural Studies at WACAE (now Edith Cowan University) for three years and has recently written an External Study Unit for Edith Cowan University on counselling/helping skills. Suzi's speech formed the Keynote Address at the NT Youth Affairs Conference held in Darwin, 29 April 1991.



# THE NEW FEDERALISM

## A can of worms for community services?

MARTIN ATTRIDGE

*The new federalism debate has the potential to radically alter services provided for young people, particularly in the area of SAAP funded accommodation services. YANQ has been involved with other organisations in both lobbying and providing information to the field on the impact of the SAAP review. In this article Martin Attridge provides an overall perspective on the new federalism and outlines how community services funding programs, such as SAAP, fit into the debate.*

Before entering Parliament, Bob Hawke fearlessly predicted there would be no state governments in Australia by the turn of the century - the country would be a republic.

After eight years as Prime Minister, Bob Hawke's vision has become more modest. In July 1990 he proposed that we should spend the decade leading to the 2001 centenary of Federation attempting to make the Australian federal system perform. This would be achieved by a redefinition of responsibilities between governments (federal, state and local) leading to a closer partnership. The opening of this can of worms was hailed as the new federalism.

Attempts to reshape the federalism model of Australian government have been on the agenda for every decade this century. Mr Hawke is determined that his vision of new federalism is not discarded like its predecessors. In so doing he has embarked upon a complex process of negotiation with the states and territories whereby "everything is on the table".

What is on the table at the new federalism dinner party and who has been invited to date?

By world standards, Australia is a highly centralised federation. The Commonwealth raises about 80 per cent of taxation revenue. Vertical fiscal imbalance is the term used to describe the effect of Commonwealth domination of revenue-raising and the fact that states/territories and local government spend more than they raise.

The Federal Government supplements state/territory budgets through financial assistance grants (for general purpose expenditure) and tied grants (whereby funds are allocated to agreed purposes, primarily through specific purpose payments).

Commonwealth-state financial arrangements are under fundamental review as part of the new federalism process. According to a 1990 OECD report, state and local government taxes in Australia

---

### What is on the table at the new federalism dinner party and who has been invited to date?

---

are barely half the size of taxes in other federations. Some premiers favour a state-based goods and services tax being agreed to. There is Commonwealth concern at the inflationary prospects of such a tax.

The Working Party on Tax Powers is looking at means to adjust the distribution of taxation powers. The Tied Grants Working Party is considering the extent of tied grants (which comprise about half of Commonwealth payments to states and territories).

During the October 1990 Special Premiers' Conference the premiers called upon the Federal Government to reduce tied grants to 30 per cent of Commonwealth grants within five years. This ambit

bid was rejected by the Prime Minister, though a "substantial reduction of tied grants" was promised.

## SPECIFIC PURPOSE PAYMENTS

The Hawke new federalism agenda is vast. It includes a multitude of micro-economic reform matters, such as reform of government trading enterprises; regulatory reform (for example, product packaging and labelling); the creation of a national rail freight corporation and consideration of road funding arrangements, electricity networks and infrastructure spending.

However, the agenda also includes the reduction of specific-purpose payments (SPPs). The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet calculates that there are some 87 SPPs, involving education, health, social security and welfare, housing and community services, culture and recreation, labour and employment, industry assistance and development, and environment programs. I will focus on community service SPPs.

Primarily, such SPPs have been introduced to enable a direct Commonwealth role in areas where the states had proved manifestly inadequate or required incentives for action. Community service SPPs have been a means for the Commonwealth to meet national objectives and responsibilities and ensure national standards of service delivery.

A number of functional reviews and working parties are considering SPPs. The major player is the Tied Grants Working Party. The working party will identify "the scope for immediate significant rationalisation" of SPPs. It has been briefed to recommend how SPP conditions "may be eliminated or modified to achieve greater flexibility for state governments and improve program efficiency" at the November 1991 Special Premiers' Conference.



In assigning roles and responsibilities, the working party is obliged to focus on "both the most efficient method of delivery and, importantly, on the outcome for the programs' clients".

There is also a review of matched funding being conducted. Matched funding is commonly required in SPPs to lever a financial commitment from state governments.

The Tied Grants Working Party and the Functional Review Committees are presently looking at four possible options. These are:

- \* *Programs funded solely by the Commonwealth. These could be independently run or could be contracted to the states for service delivery and administration.*
- \* *Programs provided by the states through untied grants (FAGS). This option could include joint state/commonwealth planning and evaluation roles.*
- \* *To "broadband" SPP programs into groups with similar objectives. Funding would still be by tied grant.*
- \* *To retain the current arrangements (with some variations possible).*

The functional reviews will be obliged to evaluate each of the current SPPs against each of these options and report on the implications. Ministerial councils will consider the conclusions of the functional reviews and make recommendations for the November 1991 Premiers' Conference.

## SAAP AND HACC

There is considerable concern in the community sector regarding the future of SPPs for community services. Much of this concern has been directed to the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and the Home and Community Care Program (HACC). SAAP and HACC were among the functional areas given the highest priority for examination by the October 1990 Special Premiers' Conference. Other priorities included health, aged care, housing and labour market programs.

Let us consider developments regarding the HACC and SAAP programs.

There are a number of major committees and processes now looking at the Home and Community Care

Program from different angles. These are the Interdepartmental Committee on Fiscal Equalisation, the Mid-Term Review of Aged Care, the Tied Grants Working Party and the National Health Strategy.

A report on HACC was made to the July 1991 Special Premiers' Conference. An options paper was prepared and endorsed by Commonwealth, state and territory HACC officials. This was considered by ministers responsible for the HACC program at a joint meeting of the Australian Health Ministers' Conference and the Council of Social Welfare Ministers in late March.

The options paper addressed issues of HACC services delivery to specific groups and outlined "tensions and pressures" within the program.

The paper presented a number of options for the reform of existing administrative practices and conditions. The first option proposed was to move that joint ministerial approval would only be required for the regional allocation of funds consistent with a strategic plan. State ministers may then allocate funds as they see appropriate. The role of the Commonwealth would be contained to ensuring national objectives are met and to evaluate the program.

The first option may abolish the joint officers mechanism which is a key facet of current decision-making, involving both Commonwealth and state officials. This would require mechanisms to ensure consistent consumer outcomes.

The second option suggested that the Commonwealth either delegate all project approvals or an amount up to \$100,000 a year to the state/territory manager of the federal department.

Thirdly, an option was mooted which allowed the state/territory minister total approval power consistent with an agreed strategic plan and funding level. A sub-option was to discontinue any Commonwealth involvement in officer consideration of individual projects.

There is considerable and serious unease in the community sector about the option to completely withdraw Commonwealth involvement in the program. The general view is that the Commonwealth must retain a significant involvement in policy and funding, especially in the determination of national standards and data collection.

A number of problems have beset the operation of the HACC program, including lack of funds, spiralling and unmet needs and duplication of administration. There is no doubt that HACC could benefit from some of the attention it is receiving and be made more responsive to consumer needs.

Conversely, if the Commonwealth reduces its role in HACC there are grave dangers. The Australian Pensioners and Superannuants Federation questions whether the rights of HACC service users would be damaged in such circumstances. They believe a Commonwealth role is fundamental for user rights to become a central issue for ongoing funding and ensuring quality of care for consumers. An open and informed debate on these matters is imperative.

Arrangements for the functional review of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program were agreed at the joint Health and Social Welfare Ministers' meeting in March 1991. The terms of reference adopted for the functional review require a

---

### **State and territory autonomy will rip the national fabric of community services into eight tatty pieces.**

---

consideration of future roles and responsibilities of various tiers of government. The review is required to have regard to the October Special Premiers' Conference principle that the extent of tied grants "should be reduced in order to provide more flexibility for the states in the management of their budgets". The review is obliged to look at means to improve the existing system of programs.

It is expected to maintain close linkages with the Tied Grants Working Party and consider the relationship of SAAP with other programs. The review will consider administrative arrangements with regard to cost effectiveness and maximising client benefits.

The SAAP functional review, chaired by Tasmania, has now begun. Akin to other functional reviews, they are experiencing problems due to the vast array of review processes being conducted. The concerns of the community sector in regard to HACC are also pertinent to SAAP.

Overshadowing the sheer complexity of the functional review process is the issue of taxing powers and the Hawke commitment to substantially reduce tied grants. The Commonwealth focus has been on client outcomes and some states consider this will make clear decisions difficult. The functional review process has only just started and may be overtaken by political decisions negotiated by heads of government in November 1991.

### **COMMUNITY SECTOR RESPONSES**

Community groups have not allowed the processes of new federalism to proceed unremarked. Concerned



at the implications for "at-risk" Australians, the community sector has made a number of responses, expressing trepidation at possible outcomes of the new agenda.

Community organisations have, for example, expressed considerable concern at a remodelling of the SAAP which reduces Commonwealth involvement. It is argued that homelessness is a national problem and requires a national response. The causes of homelessness are complex and their resolution is reliant on integrated responses which address such matters as employment and health problems. The states have a poor record of providing such integrated responses.

It is only through SAAP that some states have been encouraged to provide real services to the homeless. The retreat of the Commonwealth would mean that

---

**The absence of public information on any aspect of the new federalism is a major gripe.**

---

some states may treat homelessness as an insignificant issue leading to the reduction of funding of services and the dismantling of a national network of services.

The recurrent theme of community concern is the possible impact on clients, who are politically and economically powerless. The community sector considers that a weakening of the Commonwealth role would diminish accountability. For instance, some states have already sought to use the SAAP for inappropriate purposes, such as housing state wards.

Organisations such as National Shelter, the National Youth Coalition for Housing, the National Women's Housing Caucus, the National Council for Women, the Women's Electoral Lobby and the Council for the Homeless Persons have expressed considerable concern about the future of the SAAP. Services at a local level across Australia are angry that the SAAP is a key part of the new federalism negotiations. The Australian Council of Social Service sent a letter to the Prime Minister in April warning that the proposals could "hold grave dangers for low-income and disadvantaged Australians".

The Consumers' Health Forum also wrote to Mr. Hawke in April with the support of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the Youth Affairs Council, the Australian Community Health Organisation, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils, Disabled Persons International, the Australian Council on the Ageing and others.

The joint letter expressed concern at what new federalism would mean for "at-risk Australians". It applauded initiatives to improve the efficiency of health and community services. However, all organisations stated that the simple devolution of health and community services to the states was totally unacceptable, particularly in the absence of guarantees that services would continue or nationally be retained.

The organisations suggested that "it would be a blow to all Australians... to simply hand over services to the states without adequate enforceable guidelines".

The absence of public information on any aspect of the new federalism is a major gripe. The community sector firmly believes that there must be a transparent and rational process rather than an aura of secrecy.

The implications of new federalism in a range of arenas have been challenged by environment groups, mental health and psychiatric disability groups, and education groups. The Catholic Bishops met with various Commonwealth ministers in late April to voice their concerns.

Nobody is proclaiming that current arrangements are perfect. Existing arrangements can be made to work more effectively, but a reduced Commonwealth role is not part of such a solution.

As may be deduced, there is wide reaction to the more extreme options which are known to be under discussion for community services as part of new federalism.

## POLITICAL RESPONSES

Many community organisations have corresponded or met with federal ministers and backbenchers. On April 11, the Labor Caucus Community Services and Welfare Committee unanimously endorsed a motion which expressed their "deep concern about the direction in which the Government is heading on possible devolution of community services and welfare functions to the states".

Particular "frustration" was expressed with regard to proposals for homelessness. Later discussion in the ALP Caucus indicated that there was wide-spread (cross-factional) trepidation.

The Community Services and Welfare Committee motion was not put to a vote in Caucus, but there was a clear message to the Cabinet. Mr. Hawke gave an assurance to Caucus that no decisions would be made which disadvantaged any recipient.

Some ministers have been quite open in their concern about reducing the Commonwealth role in community services. Cabinet is expected to discuss three items. Commonwealth-state relations, vis-a-vis a letter from the Minister of Social Security, Graham Richardson, to Mr. Hawke; a further five-page letter on similar matters from the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, John Dawkins and consideration of the options for the HACC.

State premiers have also been rocking the boat. The West Australian Premier, Carmen Lawrence, threatened to withdraw from the Special Premiers' Conference in July on the basis that the Commonwealth appeared unwilling to give any ground on tax-sharing arrangements, tied grants and duplication.

The New South Wales, Queensland, South Australian and Tasmanian premiers all wrote to the Prime Minister in April expressing concern at what they perceived as the Commonwealth's stubbornness. For instance, the letter of April 12 from the South Australian Premier, John Bannon, was inspired by the report behind the front-page headline in the April 10 *Canberra Times*: "Richardson to PM: back off". Mr. Bannon suggested that Senator Richardson's public position was a "flagrant breach of arrangements", indicating a "lack of commitment".

Functional departments and central agencies at both federal and state/territory levels have quite different objectives in the new federalism process. Functional departments consider that their programs are threatened by diminishing tied grants. Central agencies at the state/territory level are intent on absolute "budgetary flexibility" through the abolition of tied grants.

The senior Commonwealth and state/territory officials steering the new federalism process met in Adelaide on July 9, 1990. Conflict at a political level on the future of tied grants was reflected in their discussions. It is a considerable challenge to try to focus these tensions in a positive way. Federalism is, above all, about compromise. Nobody could argue that the compromises negotiated in the 1890s are all relevant today. Federalism has been constantly reshaped through power plays by different tiers of government and decisions of the High Court.

## CONCLUSIONS

The 1990 commitment of Mr. Hawke that new federalism meant "better services, better delivered" is admirable. Locking it into a substantial reduction of tied grants was not so well advised. Within the community services arena it would appear unlikely that reducing tied grants would produce a "better

services, better delivered" outcome. The relentless enthusiasm of state premiers for a reduction on tied grants is not necessarily inspired by a commitment to social justice. The evidence to date is that "budgetary flexibility" is the overwhelming objective for the states. The logical conclusion is that funds would be diverted from community services if tied grants were relaxed. The support systems of the welfare state would be turned off.

One must remember that tied grants were introduced to ensure a general standard of services was available to Australian citizens. State and territory autonomy will rip the national fabric of community services into eight tatty pieces. Australia cannot allow new federalism to degenerate into new feudalism. To counter this, the application of the ALP social-justice agenda of access, equity, equality and participation is urgently needed.

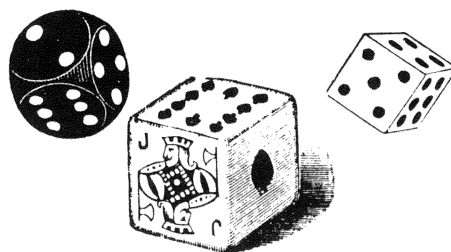
Any assessment of the new federalism in the light of the proclaimed ALP social-justice objectives would expose many options as seriously deficient. Australia must adopt a strategic long-term approach to the delivery of community services. Australia must not allow state egotism to threaten national agendas.

Nor should the centralist tendencies of state government with respect to local government go unremarked. We must find means to shelter social policy from political manipulation by economic rationalists. Introduction of greater accountability for expenditure by states, along with enhanced data collection, standards and evaluation is long overdue.

Perhaps the first step in the new federalism process should have been to insert a Bill of Rights in the Constitution. The 1988 Constitutional Commission developed an excellent draft. On the basis of such constitutional guarantees, there may be some room to consider adjustments to roles and responsibilities for community services.

New federalism is unlikely to go down in the history of community services as a great leap forward. Current leaping is becoming more and more subdued and aimless - almost like a frog on barbiturates.

Martin Attridge works for National Shelter, the peak housing organisation.



# DEVELOPING REGIONAL RESPONSES TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

## *THE USE OF RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION AS COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES*

MANDY NIELSEN AND PHIL CRANE

### INTRODUCTION

In the past two years a number of time limited regional studies relevant to young people have been undertaken in Queensland (eg. Youth Services Study North Albert Shire 1990, Capricornia Youth Needs Study 1990). The sharing of insights from such studies contributes to the ongoing definition and development of responses to issues faced by young people.

This article summarises the main findings of one such study conducted into youth homelessness in the Gold Coast area during 1990-91 and details insights into the Youth Initiatives Program consultation process which was one source of data for this study. The study reinforces much of the material written on youth homelessness to date.

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

As a response to the problems highlighted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into Homeless Children, the federal and state governments throughout Australia made available special funding over a four year period for the development of innovative accommodation related youth programs. In Queensland this funding was made available through the Youth Initiatives Program (YIP).

When it became apparent that the Gold Coast area was to be targeted in the 1990-91 allocation of YIP funding, a grant was sought by the Youth Housing sub-committee of the Gold Coast Interagency to conduct a six month study on the needs of young homeless people in the area. It was believed such a study would assist with the identification of gaps in the current provision of services to homeless young people as a precursor to the development of submissions for YIP funding.

The study had a number of elements:

- initial consultations via an agency survey (65 surveys returned giving a response rate of 41%);
- a mapping of current service provision to young people;
- gaining the views of young people on the Gold Coast via semi-structured individual and group interviews (38 young people involved);
- collation of relevant demographic information (ABS, Social Security, Police and DFSAIA data);
- a community consultation process (over 50 agencies involved).

### FINDINGS

The findings of this study have implications for the development of services on the Gold Coast. They also raise however, questions about the development of youth services generally.

The findings confirmed an overall shortage of accommodation options for young people. In particular, the lack of any short term accommodation facility was frequently highlighted as an important need by both young people and service providers. A short term facility had been funded previously but over time it had moved into medium term provision.

In addition longer term accommodation options were clearly identified by young people and agencies as needing substantial development. The study concluded that, in addition to the gaps mentioned, a more integrated approach across the range of accommodation services was needed.

The issues raised by young people and agencies echoed the findings of the Burdekin Report and



O'Connor (1989) in relation to juvenile justice. Of particular concern was access to adequate legal representation, a lack of knowledge by young people of their legal rights and the utilisation of watchhouses for young people. As one young woman said:

*It's so disgusting in there. There's all these drunk guys and they come in and say all this stuff to you. I just burst out crying one night.*

Of special concern to the researcher was the lack of services catering for the special needs of young women, particularly young pregnant women and single parents.

Further, there appeared to be a lack of widespread knowledge by young people of those services which were available to young homeless people. For example, a young person who had spent one week living on the streets said:

*I've lived in and out of this area most of my life but I didn't know where the hell vacancies were, where the hostels were. Like I didn't even know this one existed and I'd walked past it two or three dozen times and never knew this was a hostel.*

Other themes seen by young people and agencies as being significant elements in sustaining youth homelessness were:

- \* Community misconceptions of the causes and dimensions of youth homelessness.
- \* Lack of income: 20% of the young people surveyed in the Gold Coast Welfare Interagency Census on youth homelessness had no source of income.
- \* Shortage of accessible employment opportunities.
- \* The gap between political rhetoric and action/reality. A number of young people expressed frustration at what they believed was political inaction and misunderstanding of their situation.

*Well, if you want my opinion, the Government sends these surveys around ... But we never hear anything more about it, and we never get anything done.*

- \* Staff shortages at the local Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs offices.

- \* The effect of living in a tourist city. It was suggested that problems such as homelessness and juvenile crime were not sufficiently acknowledged:

*... they want to ignore the fact that there is a problem with regards to homelessness: that there is a problem with crime committed by adolescents ... you can't have those kinds of things going on in a tourist centre.*

Lack of coordination between services was frequently identified by agencies as a problem. The study concluded that both interagency networks and links to peak bodies needed further strengthening in order for more integrated development processes to be achieved.

The need for the development of processes for consultation with and involvement of young people in the formation and delivery of services/programs emerged as a strong theme throughout the study. This gap was consistently identified by young people themselves who indicated that the lack of such input hampered the effectiveness of such services/programs:

*I hate someone saying, right, there's a program running next week, come along, and you turn up and they say, right, you're gonna be doing this and that.*

This raises the further issue of the need for young people's involvement in the ongoing evaluation of services they utilise.

One unplanned, innovative mechanism that allowed some input of young people into the consultation process involved students from a Gold Coast high school presenting the findings of a survey which asked 100 year 8 to 11 students to prioritise the service needs of young people in their area. They

---

### **Lack of coordination between services was frequently identified by agencies as a problem.**

---

reported an extremely high participation rate by students in the survey attributable to its being conducted by young people. The survey identified the top three priorities for the area as emergency accommodation, a CES office and a centre where services could address family and drug related problems. The implication is that peer research, of which this is one type, could well be incorporated into the planning stage of service development at local and regional levels.

## INSIGHTS FROM THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

The study process was utilised by the government departments as a vehicle to disseminate and gather information from the 'community' of agencies with interest in the YIP funding process. This coincidence allowed the researcher to gain a number of insights as to the strengths and limitations of the consultation process used. These insights are offered in the light of the current interest in numerous quarters in consultation processes between the government and non-government.

### STRENGTHS

- \* Provided an opportunity for wider community input into the funding process.
- \* The emphasis on joint community proposals over individual agency-based submissions would appear to be a genuine attempt to get away from the divisiveness and agency isolation that the individual submission system can encourage.
- \* Provided an impetus for agencies (government and non-government) to come together and talk about some of the 'hard' issues confronting them as a service network eg. different concepts of need and different models of service delivery.

- \* The availability of resources to facilitate communication within the region (eg. Departmental officers, facilitation fees, the researcher).
- \* Generated a rich variety of information that was able to be utilised in the decision-making process. The explicitness of information and communication processes promoted greater information exchange, clarification and debate in the region than more closed methods of service development would have allowed.

### LIMITATIONS

There was a sense of various agencies, government and non-government, learning 'on the run' with regard to consultation processes. Consultation processes, it is argued, need to acknowledge the developmental nature of relationship-building between agencies that may need to occur in the early stages of regional consultation. Current inquiry into consultation processes occurring through the Office the Cabinet within the Queensland Government is a potential source of clarification.

Some significant factors which on reflection limited the Gold Coast experience were:

- \* The tight time frame of the consultation process given the developmental nature of such a process. As a result the community was placed in the position of having to absorb a large volume of information re funding programs/guidelines and act on this as a unified group to produce joint proposals in a relatively short period of time.

- \* The above raises the question of when government departments should communicate their intentions and expectations regarding funding processes to the non-government sector. Formal notification of targeting and the availability of written parameters well in advance of face to face consultation were seen as particularly important.

- \* Lack of affirmative mechanisms to ensure or even encourage ongoing, meaningful service user participation and involvement in the process. The



people consulted, therefore, were not the direct consumers of youth services, but rather the representatives of government and non-government services. While such people may feel they are accurately representing their client group, they have not experienced the services first hand and can therefore only be seen at best as consumer advocates rather than consumer representatives (May, 1989).

Given that the Federal Government's Strategy for Young Australians talks of 'giving young people a voice through appropriate consultative mechanisms' (1989:41), it would seem appropriate that attention be given to developing such mechanisms within future community consultation processes to ensure young people's voices are indeed heard.

- \* There was no non-government representation in the decision-making stage of the process. This lack of decision-making involvement led to substantial questioning by a significant number of participants regarding the value of their input.
- \* The size and demographic diversity of the geographic area expected to be covered by the consultation process raised concerns. These concerns appeared to be justified as the needs of homeless young people in areas not on the coastal strip, areas with little agency infrastructure, were not specifically addressed. This raises the question of how and by whom the 'community of interest' to be involved in a consultation process is defined.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher's role was reported by regional participants as one of value, of relative objectivity given the various interests, and of performing an important facilitative role in the identification and documentation of local needs. Resourcing of this nature is critical given the lack of regional infrastructure resources. By way of reflection research could best assist the consultation process where it clearly precedes and feeds into the proposal development stage.

While a number of limitations in the YIP consultation process have been identified, it would appear that the process of targeting the Gold Coast area in this fashion resulted in a substantially higher level of communication between agencies on the need for a more integrated and intense response to the needs of homeless young people in the area. In this way the process can be seen to be one step in responding to the

Burdekin Inquiry finding of a need for increased linkages between agencies and increased complementarity of services.

The articulated use of collaborative, regional research, together with such consultative processes, seems worthy of further exploration as a method for recognising both the substantive regional issues of youth homelessness and the developmental issues that exist in generating regional service responses.

## REFERENCES

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (1989), Our Homeless Children - Report of the National Inquiry into Homeless Children, Canberra: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, AGPS.
- Dept of Employment, Education and Training (1989), The Federal Government's Strategy for Young Australians, Canberra: AGPS.
- Kranz Consulting Services (1990) Youth Services Study, Beenleigh and District Interagency.
- May, J. (1989) "Consultation: A critical factor in policy processes", in Towards a Fairer Australia, Report and Proceedings of the Brisbane Outreach Community Workshop, Brisbane: Dept of Social Security.
- Nielson, M. (1991) Gold Coast Area Homeless Youth Services Study, Gold Coast: Surfers Paradise Anglican Crisis Care.
- O'Connor, I. (1989) Our Homeless Children: Their Experiences, Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, AGPS.
- Simpson, G. (1990) Capricorn Coast Youth Needs Study, Brisbane: Division of Youth.

Mandy Nielsen was employed by Surfers Paradise Anglican Crisis Care to research youth homelessness on the Gold Coast. Mandy is currently employed in the Juvenile Advocacy Service of Youth & Family Service (Logan City) Inc.

Phil Crane is a lecturer in the School of Social Science, QUT. Phil coordinates the Youth Services strand in the Bachelor of Social Sciences offered at Carseldine Campus.

The research was jointly funded by the DFSAIA and the DCS&H.



# is work experience really working?

GREGORY  
LEWIS

SUSAN  
ROBERTSON

## CHALLENGING THE VALUES OF WORK EXPERIENCE FOR INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED STUDENTS

*The philosophy promoted in the following article remains relevant today and challenges those teachers/guidance officers involved in the transition of students from school to work to make sure work experience works for the student. Work experience must be planned and contribute to realistic long term career development for the student, reflecting his or her career aspirations rather than what is available.*

### INTRODUCTION

Work Experience remains a central strategy in the transition of intellectually disabled students into open employment. The work experience model in special education settings is a replication of the model which exists in regular schools.

The applicability of this work experience model as the severity of the student's disability increases, is questionable. Resources available within the special school to adequately monitor and support each student in work experience are severely limited. The only available solution to special school teachers is to provide work experience in open employment for a sub-set of their student population. Logically, this sub-set would comprise those students who are likely to absorb the least school resources. Or, to put it another way, only those students who present with mild disabilities.

For those students whose disabilities are more severe, teachers are forced to seek out work experience settings where additional support is available on-site to offset the limited school resources. The obvious choice available to teachers is a supported employment environment where specialist habilitation staff are present at all times.

Thus a major factor in determining whether to trial a student in supported or open employment is resource availability, while the student's career interests are a secondary consideration. Students who are streamed into support work experience are encouraged not to develop normal career ambitions, so as not to build false expectations. Consequently, long before they even leave school and long before their peers in regular school settings are required to decide about their future, the majority of intellectually disabled students have been streamed into supported work experience and had their range of career options

severely restricted. Clearly the way to keep career options open for as long as possible is to provide some open employment experience for every student. Even if a student's vocational outcome is supported employment, the open employment experience will remain a useful transitional aid. (Wehman, Kragel and Barcus, Unpublished Monograph).

The opposite is unlikely to hold true. Supported work experiences do not equip the student with the critical skills that would be demanded in open employment.

Whilst the authors support the notion of work experience and its primary importance in any transitional programmes, the model in its current form is structurally flawed. The purpose of this paper is to identify its flaws and suggest improvements that will render work experience more effective and applicable to the majority of intellectually disabled students.

### WHAT'S MISSING IN WORK EXPERIENCE?

#### Flaw One: Lack of Research into Likely Future Job Openings

Insufficient demographic information is available to work experience teachers regarding local employment opportunities. Work experiences are often arranged in industries where minimal opportunities exist for fully paid future employment. For example, a popular work experience placement for intellectually disabled female students is in child care facilities. This is in spite of the fact that child care aides must be certificated to be employed in the field. It is unlikely that the student would be able to meet the academic entry requirements or complete the Child Care Certificate Course.

The authors are aware of a number of work experiences being made available to male students in the spray painting and printing industries. Ongoing employment in these industries would require the students to complete an apprenticeship.

Placing workers in jobs where prospects for the future employment are limited represents an opportunity cost for resources-depleted school transition services and for the students alike. Often, skills acquired in these specialised jobs have minimal transferability to likely future employment fields. Students develop unrealistic career interests and have their expectations falsely raised. Finally, the opportunity to market intellectually disabled workers in jobs where future employment is feasible is missed.

#### Flaw two: Insufficient Negotiation with the Employer

Work experience teachers often do not have sufficient time to negotiate the parameters of the planned work experience. Job requirements are not clearly defined, job tasks are not stipulated, acceptable performance levels are not agreed upon and supervision responsibilities are not allocated. Consequently the student is unclear about the required performance in a work place. Lack of direction will make it more likely that the student will go off-task resulting in a decrease in productivity. This will probably consolidate any existing co-worker prejudices and lead to co-worker avoidance which will diminish the student's opportunities for social interaction. The student is likely to feel alienated, worthless and unwelcome in the workplace.

#### Flaw Three: Absence of a Structured Training Plan

Few work experiences are accompanied by a structured training plan with well defined objectives and clear outcomes. Task analyses are not constructed and therefore potentially difficult jobs are not identified. Assessment of work quality and production output becomes sporadic, subjective and reliant on co-worker feedback. Opportunities for objective comparisons with co-workers are lost as are opportunities for marketing the student's actual work skills to the company. The inability to accurately measure production deficits means that remediation of these deficits is unlikely. In the absence of quantitative data on the student's real strengths, discussions between the employer, the school and parents are likely to focus on observed weaknesses.

#### Flaw Four: Lack of On-The-Job Training

The work experience model relies upon passive skill acquisition where the worker is expected to absorb and display useful work behaviours via a process of observation. A major discrimination of intellectually disabled people is the difficulty they have in absorbing and acting upon information that is presented via conventional channels (Gold, 1980). The hallmark of successful habilitation programmes has been the inclusion of training systems such as task analysis, prompting, shaping and fading to enrich the instructional process. In the

absence of enhanced training on-site the student will be subject to the vagaries of normal company training procedures. The failure of the student to respond adequately will most likely lead management to conclude that intellectually disabled workers are difficult and costly to train. Students will then be exposed to failure in yet another area of their lives, will likely suffer further reduction in self-esteem and be more hesitant about re-approaching open employment. Finally, the student's failure will encourage over-protection on the part of parents and teachers with regard to future trials in open employment.

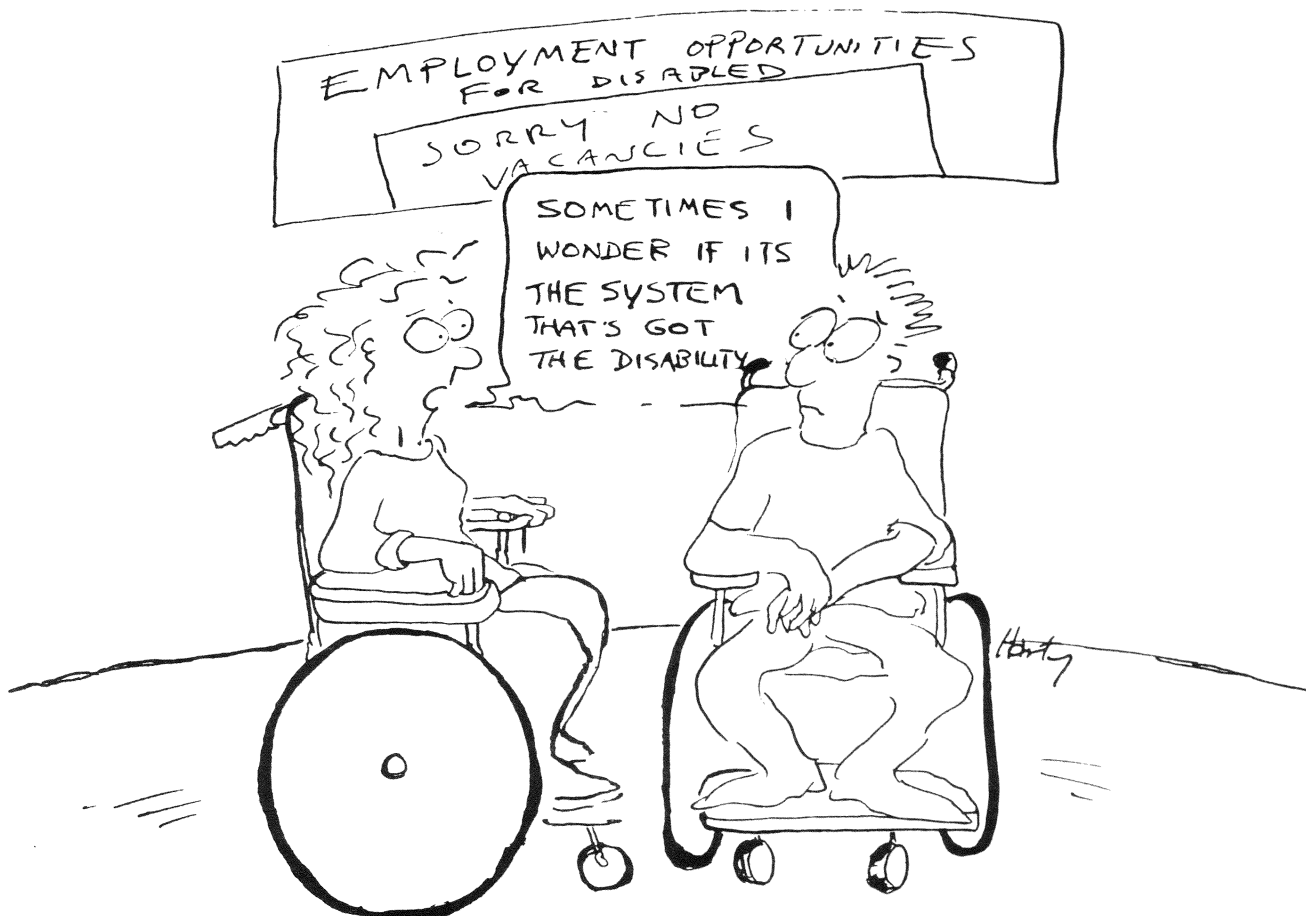
#### Flaw Five: Absence of Pay

Because the employer is not required to pay the student for productive output, expectations are minimal. Thus, the student is not exposed to the normal expectations of an employer in open employment. The student does not have a status as paid worker, no right to Workers' Compensation, no legal protection from exploitation and no formal access to unions or arbitration courts. (Lewis, 1983).

The authors are aware of a number of cases of exploitation of work experience students. One male student was placed on work experience with an assembly company. Two years later, that student, unbeknown to the school, continued to work as a full time employee on a salary of thirty dollars a week. This was in spite of the employer's admission that the student's work performance was equivalent to his fully paid co-workers. The employer's justification was that he couldn't keep the student on if he had to pay the award wage. The student's parents vetoed any attempts to redress the exploitation on the grounds that any position that occupied the student during the daytime was preferable to unemployment.

The net effect of unpaid or substantially under-paid work experience is that the student's image of his or her own value as a worker is lowered. The employer's image of the value of intellectually disabled workers is similarly lowered.

The lack of a normal financial expectation reinforces the employer's belief that he or she is dispensing charitable responsibilities by providing work experience opportunities to intellectually disabled students. That employer may be less conducive to future approaches to employ an intellectually disabled worker on award wages. The earlier example of exploitation is an obvious case of that logic in operation.





## MAKING WORK EXPERIENCE WORK

Hasazi, Gordon and Roe (1985) investigated the post-school employment status of 462 intellectually disabled students in Vermont, U.S.A. All students exited school between 1979 and 1983 and had been in receipt of special education services. The findings of this investigation provide statistical support for many of the observations made in this paper (albeit from a different country with an equivalent work experience model).

In relation to current employment status, Hasazi et al found that of those 81 students who had work experience in high school, 47% were currently employed whilst of the 219 students who had not had work experience 58% were currently employed.

In addition, 70% of students who had held a paid part-time job sometime during high school were currently employed whilst only 41% of those who did not have a part-time job were employed at the time of the survey. Finally, 69% of students who had held a school holiday job were employed compared with 37% who had not had a holiday job.

Significant differences also existed in terms of current wages earned by these various groups. While 28% of students who had not had work experience were earning better than US\$5 per hour, only 16% of work experience students were earning the same wage. Students who had held part-time jobs and earned more than US\$5 per hour numbered 30% compared with 16% of students who had not worked part-time. Thirdly, 31% of students who had held holiday jobs earned in excess of US\$5 per hour as opposed to 14% of non-holiday job students. As Bellamy (1985) observed, it is uncertain whether vocational education and jobs during school are complementary or redundant predictors of employment outcomes.

The findings do present a challenge to programme developers to capitalize on the potential benefits of paid employment during school - especially since engaging in unpaid work experience while in school was not associated with the same post-school employment results as competitive part-time and holiday work.

## AN ALTERNATIVE WORK EXPERIENCE MODEL IN ACTION

Project Employment (WA) Inc. arranges open employment for workers with intellectual disabilities ranging from severe to mild (Lewis, Dempster, Law and Robertson 1986). Through its normal job search and job placement operations, Project Employment has identified high probability employment areas for

intellectually disabled workers in the Perth and Bunbury metropolitan regions. These areas include horticultural and supermarket service for males, domestic cleaning and laundry work for females and factory and process work for both males and females.

Over the period that Project Employment has been in operation, the agency has developed close relationships with a number of employers and companies in these occupational fields. Project Employment has negotiated with these companies to create part-time paid work experience opportunities leading to on-going paid full-time positions if the work experience proves successful.

Work experience positions that are currently available range from four hours to forty hours per fortnight. Hourly wages for these jobs range from \$3.60 per hour for a fifteen year old to \$5.86 for an eighteen year old [1986].

In return for the employer paying the student the award wage, Project Employment assumes all responsibility for on-the-job training and supervision for the duration of that individual's work experience. This would include clearly delineating job demands,

## The student's career interests are a secondary consideration.

task analysing all jobs, training to maximum productivity, providing regular objective feedback to the employer, the school and parents and generally enhancing the prospects of ongoing, expanded employment in that company.

By receiving the award wage, the student is entitled to Workers' Compensation, has access to the appropriate union and is protected from exploitation. Full pay also ensures that the worker is realistically exposed to the rigours and demands of open employment.

At the end of three months, the work experience placement is reviewed and a decision made as to the student's continuation as a regular member of the company workforce. From this point the worker's hours would be increased gradually until he or she became a full-time employee. Project Employment would maintain its standard follow-up services to the company and employee.

Project Employment currently has seven students in paid work experience. Two positions are domestic cleaning jobs for female students, each comprising four hours per fortnight. The remaining five jobs are in supermarket service ranging from eight hours to forty hours per fortnight. All students attend special school when not at work.

## SUMMARY

The following checklist summarizes the essential features of the Project Employment Work Experience Model.

1. Job has prospects for permanency.
2. Job has prospects for enlargement.
3. Job is accessible from student's home.
4. Job matches student's expressed work interests (if stated).
5. Job matches student's current physical abilities.
6. Job matches student's current academic abilities.
7. Job pays the award hourly wage.
8. Job requirements have been negotiated with employer.
9. Performance demands have been clearly outlined.
10. Full time on the job support is available.
11. Job design has been formulated.
12. Task analyses have been completed.
13. Monthly work reports are completed and forwarded to employer, student, school and parents.
14. Permanency is negotiated at the end of three months.

The checklist is designed to rectify the major deficiencies apparent in current work experience practices. It is intended to be applicable to students with disabilities ranging from mild to severe

intellectual handicap and thus effectively address their equivalent right of access to meaningful, productive and paid open employment. Finally, it is structured to provide positive work experience and maximize the likelihood that students who embark on that career path achieve the status to which they aspire.

## REFERENCES

- Bellamy G.T. (1985) "Transition Progress: Comments on Hasazi, Gordon and Roe", in Exceptional Children, Vol. 51 (6), pp 474-77.
- Gold M. (1980) Try Another Way, Austin, Texas: Mare Gold and Associates Inc.
- Hasazi S.B., Gordon L.R., and Roe G.A. (1985) "Factors Associated with the Employment Status of Handicapped Youth Exiting High School From 1979 to 1983", in Exceptional Children, Vol.51 (6), pp 455-69.
- Lewis, G.M. (1983) Exploring Alternative Avenues To Open Employment for Intellectually Disabled Workers, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Murdoch University, Western Australia.
- Lewis, G.M., Dempster, J.E., Lawn, R.W., and Robertson, S.K. (1986) "The G.J. Coles Venture: A Strategy for Creating Multiple Jobs for Intellectually Disabled Workers in Large Corporations", in Australia and New Zealand Journal of Developmental Disabilities, Vol.12, (1).
- Wehman, P., Creme, J., and Barcus, G.I.. From School To Work: A Vocational Transition Model For Handicapped Students, Rehabilitation Research and Training Centre, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, Unpublished Monograph.

Gregory Lewis and Sue Robertson were two of the founders of Project Employment (WA) Inc., established in 1984.

Greg is currently a practicing psychologist with The Authority for the Intellectually Handicapped in Western Australia.

Sue is a psychologist and Managing Director of PE Personnel, formerly Project Employment (WA).

Their paper was presented at the Australian Group for Scientific Studies of Intellectual Disability (AGSSOID) National Conference, Sydney, 1986, now the Australian Society for the Studies of Intellectual Disability (ASSID).

# ***ALL THIS AND MORE:***

## **ANALYSIS AND PRACTICE IN YOUTH WORK**

JENNY GILMORE

### **INTRODUCTION**

The issues of youth homelessness, offending and 'anti-social' behaviour generally are increasingly depicted in the media as a social problem of escalating proportions. Consistent with this view, governments are injecting more funds into services designed to tackle this issue. The increasing preference of governments to fund programs that are easily quantifiable, and therefore more publicly accountable, impacts heavily on service provision in the youth field.

Thus far, community calls for social response appear to be met with action inspired by a need to be seen to be doing something, rather than with an informed approach that reflects a deeper understanding of the nature and causes of young people's behaviour. This is evidenced by the paucity of literature available which is capable of generating such decisions and by the realisation that most popular explanations or analyses of young people's situations result from a focus on either an individual or a structural perspective, rather than a position that recognises the intrinsic relationship between individual experiences and structural conditions.

In this paper it is suggested that the lack of documented analysis generally is compounded by a perceived absence in the youth work field of theoretical debate and dialogue to inform practice, thereby denying the theory-practice relationship. Further, the specific lack of structural analysis for practice results in a popular practice view that considers individual experiences and structural conditions as separate entities.

The implication of this issue is that youth work interventions, be they at a direct practice, service delivery or policy level, continue to concentrate on the individual manifestations of fundamentally structural problems. Social issues then become depoliticised and individualised as young people's issues,

ensuring the maintenance of an oppressive social structure. The same is true of individual youth workers who are often blamed and often feel responsible for this absence of analysis, when in fact they are placed in positions that simply disallow the time or energy needed to process, analyse and challenge their work in its appropriate context.

In re-dressing this situation in a comprehensive rather than piecemeal manner, it becomes essential that we acknowledge the social construction of our existing ways of understanding and conceptualising, as based on the ideological context (patriarchal, racist, capitalist) in which we live. It is these understandings which in turn serve to maintain this social context when we assume that those things socially constructed are actually part of nature or inevitable, and therefore beyond our control. It is through challenging this process that the essence of this social system will be changed.

### **THEORY AND PRACTICE IN YOUTH WORK**

The contention that effective actions and interventions arise from well developed understandings and analyses is a position taken throughout this paper. It is based on the assumption that there is an intrinsic and cyclic relationship between theory and practice where new understandings inform actions which in turn create new understandings, etc.

If we accept this relationship between theory and practice or analysis and intervention, then we must also accept that action without explicit analysis will be less likely to be effective. There are inherent dangers for practice in a situation where actions become hit or miss, in that they have as much chance of being effective as not.

In the period where positive assertions about ultimate truth are being challenged, it should be noted that there is no one correct or true analysis for practice -

the process is one of developing skills to analyse and challenge, and being committed to the dynamic nature of the relationship between understanding and practice.

It appears fair to say that youth work is without well developed and articulated analyses for practice. The problem appears two-fold. Firstly, there is a lack of theory in that the literature

*reflects both a dominant anti-intellectualism within youth work and a reluctance to analyse, as opposed to record, practice.*

(Jeffs & Smith, 1987:5)

*The lack of adequate theory has led to a domination by fashion, fads, 'flavours of the month'. Practitioners have been exhausted by the pressure to keep up with these, and disappointed by their inability to integrate them within their practice or to fulfil their promise. Without a core theory based upon real-life experiences of practitioners there has been no base to which these acquisitions could be fixed.*

(Jeffs & Smith, 1987:3)

What does appear in the literature however, is a considerable number of references about the existence of single issues that affect young people, such as homelessness, single parenthood, crime, unemployment, etc. and specific methods of intervention to address these issues with young people. Whilst this is clearly necessary and important to the practice of youth work, it would appear to often be piecemeal in that these issues or interventions are not located in a wider framework or theoretical context. Practice theories which provide a framework for analysis of these issues and that give rise to methods for intervention have not been either articulated or developed.

*Keeping things at the level of 'issues' can mean that priorities remain informed by surface debates rather than by deeper political principles and realities. As a result, there is a tendency to treat issues as unique and separate, rather than springing from living within a particular social, economic and logical system.*

(Smith, 1988:80)

The other issue in this theory-practice debate relates to the applicability of theories available to inform the practice of youth work. The whole process of theory development often ensures that those theories to be used in practice are developed by 'experts' who in

turn have separated their processes from those of the practitioner; hence, the valid concern that many times these theories simply do not meet the needs of those whom they were designed to assist.

Yet the reality for all but a few youth workers in practice is that limited resources and stressful, demanding working conditions do not easily give rise to the development and documentation of practice experiences and analyses. Too often we are led to believe that those working with young people (or other groups in society) are at fault for the inability to develop and document theories for practice, yet this position ignores the reality of day-to-day work in a youth service.

The natural conclusion to draw from these points is that the social system has something very important invested in the practice of youth work continuing to be characterised by these features. The similarity between the individualising of social problems into young people's issues and those of youth workers is stark to say the least.

## INDIVIDUAL VERSUS STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

What literature does exist in the youth work area appears fragmented by a focus on either individual or structural priorities. This is particularly true at the point of analysis where we tend to see causation in either individuals or social structures.

In relation to social theory generally, Craib (1984) states that there is a **division between holistic** (individual actions are determined by their society) and **individualistic** (society as a product of individual actions) theories.

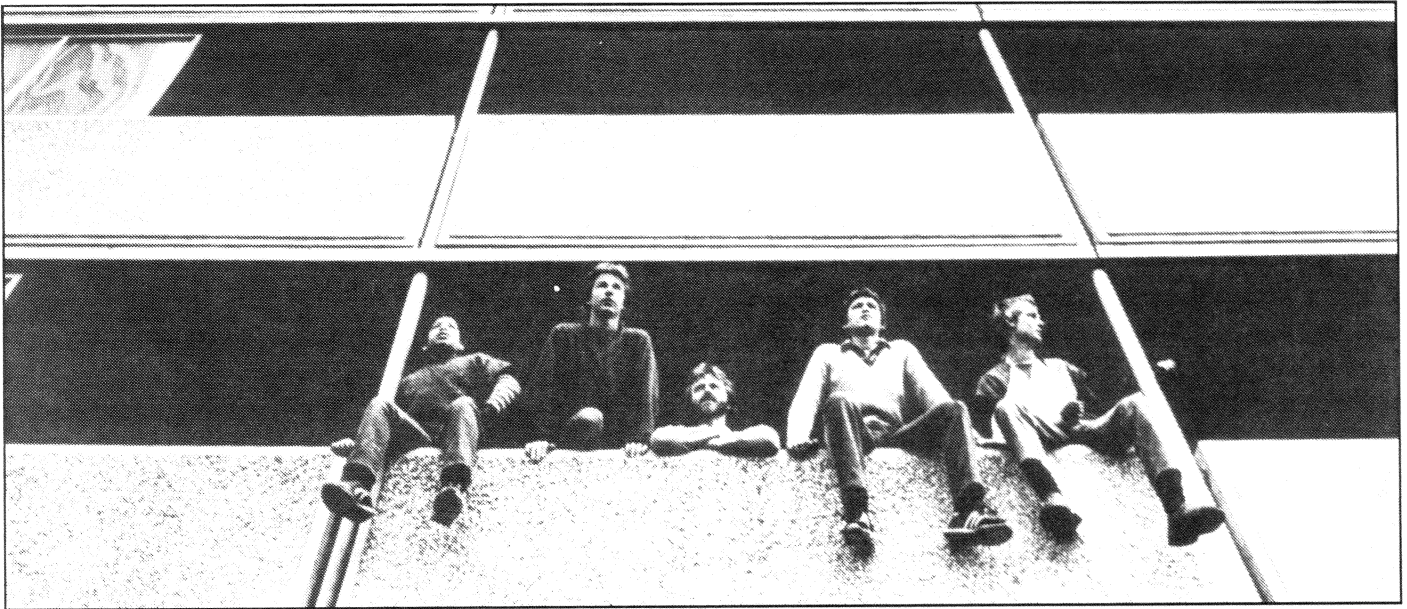
White (1990) applies this to youth workers by looking at political distinction between 'liberal' and 'radical' workers. He states that,

*The former tend to engage in the more conservative 'softer' practices which bear some similarity to the 'child saver' movements that first emerged in the nineteenth century. The latter base their work on political objectives, objectives which are tied into wider class, gender and ethnic struggles, rather than being defined in terms of 'young people' themselves.*

(White, 1990: 175).

It is suggested that there are inherent dangers in focussing on an approach that does not acknowledge the intrinsic relationship between individuals and societies.





Individual and structural analysis ... integration or fragmentation?

Concerns with an individualistic approach may already be obvious. Suffice to say that we have reached a stage in our society where few people believe the full emphasis for intervention should be directed at the individual, yet little effort is made to move the blame and responsibility for change away from individuals themselves.

An individualist, conservative practice such as this is characterised by youth workers being

*obliged to play social role, characterised by the fostering of certain ideas and practices: these obscure the structural nature of oppression and inequality; they diffuse potential political struggles against the powerful; and they mediate various forms of youth rebellion.*

(White, 1990:164).

A structural analysis locates the roots of individual problems within an oppressive social structure. Its history lies in a Marxist critique of capitalism and it now commonly regards the dimensions of race, gender and class as crucial aspects of any analysis. This perspective seeks change at the level at which the problem arises, that is within the social structure, and employs methods consistent with the eradication and de-individualisation of these social problems.

It is certainly true to say that there are dangers associated with a structural position that attempts change at this wider level with disregard to the individual. One of the primary criticisms of this approach in the past has been its inability to respond to individual issues.

Certainly in recent times a number of authors from the 'radical' social work area have responded to this criticism and highlighted the relationship between individual and structural concerns and stressed the importance of incorporating both these aspects into an analysis. (See Galper, 1980; Langan & Lee, 1989; Leonard, 1984; Moreau, 1979; Simpkin, 1983; Thorpe & Petruchenia, 1990).

For example, Leonard (1984) states:

*What is lacking is detailed attention to the dialectic between the individual and the social order, whereby the former is socially constructed, but within a context of struggle and resistance.*

(Leonard, 1984:5).

Feminist theory also has provided a great deal of insight into the relationship between 'the personal and the political', and in linking these aspects together in one analysis (Dominelli & McLeod, 1989; Fook, 1986, 1990; Hanish, 1971; Hudson, 1989; McLeod & Dominelli, 1982). Obviously, the essence of feminism specifically lies in an understanding of the oppression of women. Feminist theory, through this process, has made a significant contribution in challenging our understanding of the social structure and traditional (male) ways of understanding and explaining society.

The implication of this fragmentation between individual experiences and structural conditions for youth work is critical. An ability to recognise this link inevitably results in a direct practice which focuses primarily on presenting problems on the one hand and policy decisions which respond to political and economic agendas and priorities on the other.

It is suggested that the frustration and disillusionment often experienced by youth workers (and policy makers), not to mention the continuing issues for young people, is largely attributable to these fragmentary processes.

## RE-CONCEPTUALISATIONS

It can be suggested that the preference to fragment and separate sections of our lives and our society may in fact historically stem from the preservation of the capitalist, patriarchal, racist social system.

This raises an interesting and central issue about the perceived incompatibility of individual and structural approaches when it comes to practice. The claim that "societies and agents are two different types of explanation and understanding" is a popular practice position (Craib, 1984: 27).

However, the assertion that individual experiences and structural conditions are necessarily at opposite ends of a continuum, may merely be a construction of a capitalist, patriarchal, racist society that depends on the preservation of this assertion for its continued existence and survival.

If, for example, practitioners were to re-conceptualise their assumptions about the fundamentally inseparable nature of individual experiences and structural conditions and the relationship between theory and practice, one would question the longevity of the social context in which we live.

Whilst we are clearly getting closer to a position that recognises the importance of these links, the concern that these analyses are rarely operational in practice suggests that further and deeper exploration into the social construction of our most basic assumptions is warranted if we are to develop and implement effective analyses for practice.

## CONCLUSION

The individualising of social problems into individual issues has effectively located the responsibility for the existence of these problems with these individuals and the potential for change with the welfare workforce. To actively seek to facilitate change in this regard requires acknowledgement of the importance of linking actions to well developed analysis and the notion that individual experiences and structural conditions are artificially separated for the purposes of maintaining this social context. Unless addressed, both these elements will continue to ensure the reduced effectiveness of practice and therefore the continuing oppression of both young people and youth workers.

The tragedy, of course, is that until some change is achieved young people will continue to believe that the situations in which they live are their fault, and youth workers will continue to take responsibility for providing any means to allow individual young people to cope better with these intolerable situations.

## REFERENCES

- Craib, I. (1984) Modern Social Theory, London: Wheatsheaf Books.
- Dominelli, L. & McLeod, E. (1989) Feminist Social Work, London: Macmillan.
- Fook, J. (1986) "Feminist contributions to casework practice," in Marchant, H. & Wearing, B. (eds), Gender reclaimed: Women in social work, Sydney: Hale & Iremonger.
- Fook, J. (1990) "Radical social casework: Linking theory and practice", in Petruchenia, J & Thorpe, R. (eds), Social change and social welfare practice, Sydney: Hale & Iremonger.
- Galper, J. (1980) Social work practice: A radical perspective, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Hanish, C. (1971) "The personal is political", in Agnel, J. (ed.) The radical therapist, New York: Ballantine.
- Hudson, A. (1989) "Changing perspectives: Feminism, gender and social work", in Langan, M & Lee, P. (eds), Radical social work today, London: Unwin Hyman.
- Jeffs, T. & Smith, M. (1987) "Introduction", in Jeffs, T. & Smith, M. (eds), Youth Work, London: Macmillan.
- Langan, M. & Lee, P. (1989) "Whatever happened to radical social work?" in Langan, M. & Lee, P. (eds) Radical social work today. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Leonard, P. (1984) Personality and ideology: Towards materialistic understanding of the individual. London: Macmillan.
- McLeod, E. & Dominelli, L. (1982) "The personal and the apolitical: Feminism and moving beyond the integrated methods approach", in Bailey, R. & Lee, P. (eds), Theory and practice in social work, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Moreau, M. (1979) "A structural approach to social work practice", in Canadian Journal of Social Work Education 5 (1), pp 78 - 94.
- Simpkin, M. (1983) Trapped within welfare: surviving social work. London: Macmillan.
- Smith, M. (1988) Developing youth work. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Thorpe, R. & Petruchenia, J. (1990) "Introduction", in Thorpe, R., & Petruchenia, J. (eds), Social change and social welfare practice, Sydney: Hale & Iremonger.
- White, R. (1990) No space of their own: Young people and social control in Australia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jenny Gilmore is a Senior Tutor in the Social Work Department of the University of Queensland.

... RESEARCH UPDATES ... RESEARCH UPDATES ... RESEARCH UPDATES ...

## JUVENILE JUSTICE CONSULTATIONS

The Bicentennial Youth Foundation have funded the Youth Advocacy Centre to conduct in depth consultations with young people who have experienced the juvenile justice system.

A number of techniques are being used within:

- i) detention environment;
- ii) youth agencies in the community; and
- iii) a generalist community agency.

A broad life view of a range of key elements are being explored in contacts with up to approximately 80-100 young people. These areas are:

- \* police
- \* legal rights
- \* watchhouses
- \* accommodation
- \* income
- \* education
- \* detention
- \* family
- \* DFSAIA

The processes being used in this study are:

- \* group work
- \* storytelling
- \* one to one interviews with researcher
- \* one to one interviews with peers

Not only will the documentation of the above prove valuable, the capacity to further identify and analyse other juvenile justice issues relevant to these young people will also be developed. At this stage most of the contact with young people has been completed; the analysis phase will commence in October and documentation will follow in December 1991.

The document will provide a basis on which agencies can plan action strategies in relation to consulting with young people, working with young people and, of course, the system itself.

**CONTACT: HELEN BETTS (07) 857 1155**

## YOUTH AFFAIRS BODIES JOIN ON NATIONAL INCOME SUPPORT CAMPAIGN

A joint submission from Youth Affairs Networks and Councils around Australia has secured \$67,900 from the Bicentennial Youth Foundation to carry out a national project on youth incomes.

In Phase 1 of the project (Sept '91-Feb '92), a worker will be employed to review existing material on the subject of income support for young people. The worker will then prepare a comprehensive and concise report, outlining the arguments for reform of current income support arrangements. The report will go through a series of drafts and each Youth Affairs Network and Council will co-ordinate input to the drafts from the youth sector in their State or Territory. Issues discussed will include social security payments, youth wages, Austudy and the basic living costs of young people.

In Phase 2 of the project (Feb-April '92), the report will become the focus of a national campaign to reform income support arrangements for young people. Launches of the report will occur simultaneously throughout Australia with resourcing available for a number of launches in centres outside of capital cities. Publicity kits containing reports and promotional materials will be widely distributed.

Around the same time, a delegation will meet with Federal Ministers to present the arguments outlined in the report. The delegation will comprise representatives of each State and Territory youth affairs peak body.

The Income Support Project is being supervised and administered by the Youth Action and Policy Association from its offices in Sydney. Organisational and editorial support is being provided by a Steering Committee of representatives from YACVIC, YACSA, YANACT, and YANQ. YANQ's representative on the Steering Committee is Corrie Macdonald, our Research and Policy Officer. Readers wanting to know more about the project, or wishing to contribute ideas for either its research or campaign phase, are welcome to give Corrie a call.

**CONTACT: CORRIE MACDONALD  
ON (07) 852 1800 OR (008) 177 899**

# CORE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

A New  
Approach to  
Youth Sector Training  
in Australia

CHRIS BROWN  
FEDERATION OF YOUTH SECTOR TRAINING COUNCILS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the next twelve months the Federation of Youth Sector Training Councils, with the support of the Commonwealth Youth Bureau, will be developing a nationally accredited core curriculum for the training of workers with young people in social and community services.

The project is perhaps one of the most significant to be undertaken in the area of youth sector training. This background paper is designed to give a general introduction to the project and an indication of the various stages of development.

## 2. THE CORE CURRICULUM

The Federation's intention is to develop a core curriculum training package for workers with young people in social and community services. Although there may be some changes to the shape of the project as it develops, it is anticipated that the curriculum will have the following characteristics:

- \* The curriculum will be in a modular form, with each module consisting of the equivalent of six days of training. Each module will be made up of six "units".
- \* There will be twelve modules which will make up the core (known as core modules), and an unlimited number of modules which will be non-core. Although non-core, these modules will provide important skill and knowledge base training.

- \* The curriculum will be accredited in each State and Territory in Australia at Associate Diploma level and will consist of a total of sixteen modules made up of the twelve core modules and four of the non-core modules.
- \* The curriculum will include a process whereby workers can apply for credit based on previous formal and informal training as well as experience gained in the field. This "recognition of prior learning" will mean workers will not have to undertake formal training in areas in which they can demonstrate they already have adequate skills and competency.
- \* The curriculum will use "competency based assessment" rather than academic assessment. This means that workers will be assessed on their ability to perform their job rather than on written assignments and theoretical examinations.
- \* The training will be delivered by Youth Sector Training Councils, and other appropriate training bodies, in a delivery mode appropriate to workers in the field. As the curriculum will not be institutionally based, there will be flexibility in the way the training can be delivered.
- \* As further training is developed it can be added to the curriculum in the form of non-core modules.



In short, the curriculum, apart from increasing training opportunities, will provide workers in the field with training which:

- \* is consistent across Australia so that if workers move from one State to another, or from one area of work to another, their training will be recognised.
- \* has built-in quality controls.
- \* is accredited and therefore can be used to gain credit towards other TAFE and tertiary courses.
- \* is flexible and not tied to a rigid time line or mode of delivery. For example the six days of training in each module could be delivered in a series of half-day or one day workshops spread over weeks or months as appropriate. The training can also be delivered at any location in a state or territory to accommodate the needs of rural and isolated workers.

### 3. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Training debates on appropriate curriculum, accreditation, control and access to training, certification of training, recognition of prior learning, and professionalism have occurred in the youth sector for a number of years. Most workers in the youth sector enter the field with no training, or with training which is not directly relevant to task. There are, generally speaking, no requirements for workers to be trained before being employed in the youth sector.

Equally important is that the majority of workers have no access to relevant TAFE or tertiary courses, or prefer not to undertake their training in a formal educational institution away from the work environment. For some workers, there are problems with meeting the formal entry qualifications of tertiary institutions. Some States/Territories do not have relevant TAFE or tertiary courses and those States/Territories which do have relevant courses have limited places available.

Within this context, the Youth Sector Training Councils have attempted to respond to the youth sector's needs by offering informal short course training which is directly relevant to the work situation. Although they have been successful in this, there are still some problems with the way in which the training is being delivered. The issues, identified by the Federation are as follows:

*In his opening address to this year's YACA Congress (Melbourne, July), Peter Baldwin, Federal Minister for Higher Education and Employment Services, announced that \$220,000 in Commonwealth funding would be forthcoming for the Core Curriculum Development Project (CCDP) of the Federation of Youth Sector Training Councils.*

*Later in the Congress program, Chris Brown of the Federation provided an introduction to the CCDP. Chris emphasised the potential benefits to the sector of the project. It aims to develop an Associate Diploma which will be delivered by Youth Sector Training Councils and other appropriate training bodies throughout Australia. It will not be institutionally based and will permit flexibility in the way training is delivered.*

*The structure and mode of delivery of the core curriculum is intended to encourage increased levels of youth sector participation in high quality, accredited training programs which are consistent throughout Australia.*

*The potential impact of the CCDP on the youth sector should not be underestimated. It is vital that members of the field understand its significance and have input where appropriate. YANQ will be observing the project's development with interest and the CCDP will be holding consultation sessions in all States and Territories. At this stage it is planned that the CCDP will run a Curriculum Assessment Workshop in Queensland in November 1991. In the meantime, YANQ would welcome any comments or submissions from readers regarding this Background Paper.*

- \* As the training is not accredited, there is no recognition of the training.
- \* The training is ad hoc in that the individual training programs are not part of an identified curriculum strategy.
- \* There is no consistency of content, mode of delivery, or emphasis of training across States/Territories.
- \* Although individual Councils emphasise the quality of the training, there is no standardised basis of quality control of training.
- \* There is no process for articulation or recognised transfer of training.

Over the last twelve months there have been two important developments in the training debate which have assisted the Federation to address the issue of training for the youth sector. These are:

#### \* **Industry Training Advisory Body**

In 1990, the Commonwealth Ministers for Employment, Education & Training, and Community Services & Health, established a national steering group to make recommendations on the establishment of one or several Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITAB's) in the area of community services. This development was a recognition of social and community services as a bona fide 'industry' and was consistent with the Commonwealth Government's broader industry policy and strategy. It provided an opportunity for community services, and the youth sector in particular, to take advantage of developments in industry training.

The future funding of the Youth Sector Training Councils, beyond the current agreement period (end of 1992), is dependent on the outcomes of the National Steering Group on a Community Services ITAB due to report in late 1991.

#### \* **Youth Minister's Council**

In July of 1990, the Youth Ministers' Council, a meeting of all State/Territory and Commonwealth Ministers for youth affairs, passed a resolution requesting the Youth Sector Training Councils to address a number of training policy issues. These included:

- The accreditation of training
- The national articulation of training (including articulation into TAFE and tertiary courses)
- Issues of skills standards and competency
- Nationally agreed core curricula skills
- National curriculum development

The response from the Federation of Youth Sector Training Councils to the Youth Minister's Council resolution and the ITAB debate, based on the experience and developments to date, was to recommend the development of a nationally accredited core curriculum.

## 4. PROJECT DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

The main emphasis of the project is to develop consistent, high quality, and appropriate training for workers in the youth sector. The 'youth sector' is defined as any worker or management committee member, paid or unpaid, government or non-government, working in the social and community services industry who is having professional contact with young people.

In other words, the broadest definition possible is intended in the use of the term 'youth sector'.

### 4.1 Identifying the Core Curriculum Content

It is not proposed that the project will undertake any further research to identify the core curriculum. There have been countless training needs analyses done at National and State/Territory levels and a review of the relevant documentation can be used as the basis for identifying the broad core curriculum.

Once the broad core curriculum is identified in this manner, it is proposed that it be 'fine tuned' by conducting a one day Curriculum Assessment Workshop in each State and Territory, open to the broad youth sector.

### 4.2 Curriculum Writing

Once the core curriculum is identified, the project will contract curriculum writers to develop initial drafts of the curriculum content.

### 4.3 Pre-requisite Structure

To ensure appropriate continuity and consistency within each module, it is proposed

that each unit has the previous unit as a pre-requisite requirement. For example, before someone can undertake the second unit in a module, they must have first successfully completed the first unit in the module. This will allow a 'building block' process of learning to occur, thus ensuring a progression of learning, and depth of content and detail.

It may also be possible that some modules will have as a pre-requisite another module.

#### 4.4 Modes of Delivery

It is proposed that the project will explore the most appropriate modes of delivery taking into account content and field requirements.

#### 4.5 Assessment

Many workers, due to not having completed formal education, may have problems in coping with a formalised assessment process, and certainly there is bound to be apprehension among some workers at undertaking training which has assessment requirements. Therefore, the issue of assessment will need to be explored very carefully to ensure that it meets the needs of workers undertaking the training, whilst at the same time ensuring that quality and standards are maintained.

#### 4.6 Recognition of Prior Learning

Given the nature of the youth affairs field in Australia, and the range of previous formal and informal training and education undertaken by individuals either before or after they enter the youth affairs field, it will be necessary for this project to develop a means of recognising prior learning and giving appropriate recognition. This is, a means by which workers in the youth sector can have the knowledge, attributes, and skills which have been developed through experience, recognised and accredited.

### 5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT & REVIEW

The overall management of the project is the responsibility of the Federation of Youth Sector Training Councils. The Federation has established a Working Party to monitor and manage the project. The following process will be adopted to give the project direction and guidance.

#### \* Curriculum Assessment Workshops

A one day Curriculum Assessment Workshop

will be held in each State and Territory once a broad core curriculum has been developed. It is anticipated that this will occur within the first three months of the project. It is likely that workshops will be held in NSW, Victoria, ACT and Tasmania in October 1991 and in Queensland, WA, SA and the NT during November 1991.

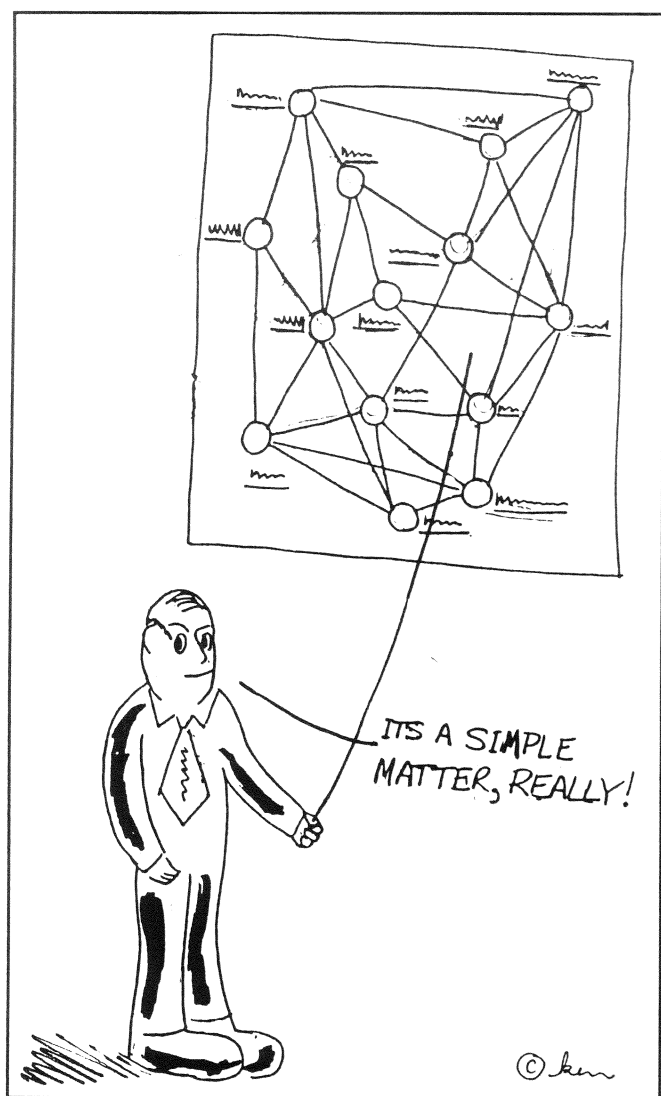
#### \* Editorial Review Group

A small editorial team (seven members and the Project Co-ordinator) will be set up to meet for two days immediately after the Curriculum Assessment Workshops have occurred, to develop the format and process for the writing of the curriculum modules, and to decide on appropriate writers for the modules. It will also meet again for four days after the curriculum has been written, to undertake a final review and to ensure flow and consistency across the whole package. It is anticipated that this group will consist of:

- Federation of Youth Sector Training Councils (Chair)
- Vocational Employment, Education & Training Advisory Council (VEETAC)
- TAFE (Curriculum Development)
- Youth Affairs Conference (YAC) Working Party on Youth Sector Training
- Tertiary Provider
- Commonwealth Youth Bureau
- Individual Trainer
- Project Co-ordinator.

#### \* Youth Affairs Conference (YAC) Working Party on Youth Sector Training

The Youth Affairs Conference is a standing committee comprised of all State, Territory and Commonwealth youth affairs officials (drawn from Youth Affairs Bureaus and their equivalents). The Working Party of this Conference will act as a Reference Group for the project and will report on the progress of the project to the Youth Ministers Council through the Youth Affairs Conference. The Project Co-ordinator will be an observer member of the YAC Working Party.



#### \* Federation of Youth Sector Training Councils

Once the project has reached the final draft stage, a meeting of all the Youth Sector Training Councils will be held to brief them on the final package, allow any fine tuning of the final package, and discuss and set-up procedures and guidelines for the implementation of the package. This group will also establish a process for on-going evaluation of the package by a Standing Advisory Committee (outlined below).

## 6. POST PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS

#### \* Training the Trainer

Once the curriculum is developed and ready to be delivered, it will be necessary for training the trainer sessions to take place in each State

and Territory to ensure consistency of quality and depth of training.

#### \* Standing Advisory Committee

Once the project is completed and the curriculum package is being implemented, a Standing Advisory Committee will be established to continue to monitor the implementation of the package and review the curriculum from time-to-time as required. It is planned that the curriculum will be ready for delivery in January 1993.

## 7. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

It is anticipated that the curriculum will form the basis for youth sector training in Australia for the foreseeable future. Due to the modular format, it will be easy to continue to build on the package in the following manner:

### 7.1 Further Accredited Non-Core Modules

As further non-core, specialised training requirements are identified, these can be developed in a modularised format that would meet the existing accreditation requirements.

### 7.2 Distance Education Mode

It would also not be difficult to develop the curriculum, or individual modules of the curriculum, in distant education (external) format, to allow workers outside major population centres to gain access to accredited core curriculum training.

## 8. STAFF AND LOCATION OF THE PROJECT

The Project will have a secretariat of three staff - a Research Officer, and an Administrative Officer.

The project will be located in Canberra at offices provided by the Commonwealth Youth Bureau.

Chris Brown is currently Training Development Executive for the Northern Territory Youth Sector Training Council. On the 2 September he commences work as Project Executive Officer for the Core Curriculum Development Project in Canberra, PO Box 152, Civic Square ACT 2608.



TOWARDS AN

INTEGRATED

POLICY

POSITION

# YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA DISCUSSION PAPER

**DRAFT ONLY****DRAFT ONLY**

LIZ DAVIES

*Since Liz Davies, Policy and Liaison Officer of the Youth Affairs Council of Australia (YACA), wrote this discussion paper in June 1991, YACA has been involved in a process where its role as the peak body of the Australian Youth sector will be handed over to a new national peak organisation to be formally established in Canberra in October 1991. This discussion paper will be passed on by YACA to the new organisation which will determine the nature of any future consultation on its content and direction.*

*YANQ is interested in using this discussion paper to generate debate on the issue of development of integrated youth policy in Queensland. We would encourage the field to respond either by phone (07) 852 1800 or by letters to the Editor of Transitions.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Youth Affairs Council of Australia defines young people as those within the age bracket of twelve years to twenty five years. This is a standard definition utilised by both government and non-government organisations which ensures some consistency in policy discussion and implementation. This population is often further divided into sub-age groups or sub-populations, for example, rural youth, young women, young ethnic minorities, young Aboriginals, young disabled and so on.

How is this population distinct from other age brackets, for example "children" or "elderly people"? Young

people's most distinctive feature is that they are in the process of emerging from dependence on their family for their well-being to responsibility for their own well-being in terms of employment, housing and so on.

A central process then when discussing young people is likely to be the process of transition from income dependency to independent income security in the movement from childhood to recognised adulthood. This transition is expected to be achieved by obtaining employment, as verified by the recent Australian National Opinion Poll, which observed the increasing emphasis young people are placing on the importance of obtaining work. It should also be noted that each

sub-population identified above faces both this transition and specific pressures upon it by virtue of their locality, gender, race or ethnic background.

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND HOUSING

An important aspect that affects a young person's transition to adulthood is housing. Every young person needs safe, secure, affordable and adequate housing. However, it has been well documented, particularly as a result of the Burdekin report, that many young people are homeless, at risk of homelessness or residing in sub-standard accommodation. Inadequate housing is either a result of the carer of a young person being unable to provide suitable housing; or of young people lacking in independent income of a level adequate to support themselves at a reasonable living standard. Special note needs to be taken of the financial hardships of many students due to the current anomalies of the Austudy scheme which undermines their ability to secure adequate housing.

In addition to an adequate income for young people, the Youth Affairs Council of Australia advocates the need for public housing for the exclusive use of young people who are in need of stable accommodation. This is considered as essential if a young person's carer is unable or unwilling to provide adequate housing.

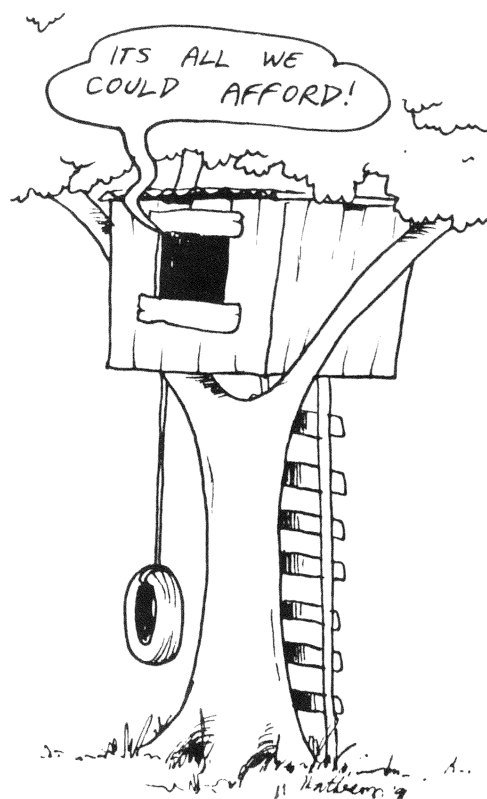
Young people also need to be informed of planning and zoning laws that influence the existing availability and costs of housing for young people.

The federal government responsibilities in its agreement with state and territory governments regarding the SAAP and HACC programs must also be reinforced to address the needs of young people who are homeless.

The last two comments demonstrate the link between access to the law, in terms of legislation, and housing. Housing is also an important variable or link in determining a young person's well-being, their achievement in education or obtaining employment, their source of income and is a large component in determining the quality of their environment.

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In a broader context young people reside within a local, national and international environment. Young people are recipients of the world they live in from their carers, community and society, both national and international. They are dependent on the readiness of current society to preserve and protect the environment for their future. However, young people



whilst still dependent or in the transition phase can make substantial contributions to the preservation of the ecological environment. Many however, are simply fighting to survive within their immediate social environment.

This paper is ordered to demonstrate the policy implications of the transitional process. The paper begins by examining the law which protects young people while they are dependent on others for their well-being; this is followed by an examination of health, housing and environmental issues, all of which determine the well-being of young people while dependent on others or in transition to adulthood. Education is then examined, recognising that young people can either be dependent on others or moving towards adulthood while attaining an education. Finally the paper examines employment and the income support which is particularly relevant to young people in the latter stages of their transition to adulthood.

It is important to note at this stage that the examination of these issues is based on supplementary discussion documents. The paper attempts to assume an integrated policy position which calls for a coordinated and integrated policy response from government to meet all young people's needs. Such an approach enables the Youth Affairs Council of Australia to represent and reflect the needs and interests of young people in a holistic manner.

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE LAW

Like all people, young people have certain rights which are acknowledged by the legal system. Many of its laws act to protect young people while they are dependent and in transition to adulthood. This is essential due to the vulnerability caused by both the marginal access young people have to direct legal representation and the authority parents, teachers, officials etc have over them. Not only must young people's rights be guaranteed but their legal needs must be met by relevant government departments or organisations.

Because young people as a whole are often unaware of their rights they are unable to utilise or enforce them. For this reason the Council advocates that simple, straightforward information on the law is developed in consultation with young people and then disseminated to young people and the broader community. A strategy such as this could be incorporated into a legal education programme at all levels in schools.

The Youth Affairs Council of Australia believes that young people's legal needs are most appropriately met by community legal centres initially state-wide

and in the longer term nationwide. It is envisaged that such Centres would provide information on the law and rights under the law to enable young people to advocate for themselves and also provide advocates for young people unable to represent themselves. Essential to the success of this initiative would be the establishment of a children's and young persons' ombudsperson at state level.

As mentioned earlier young people have very little access to the law, its making, enforcement and adjudication. A result of this lack of input is that some legal structures or processes detrimentally affect young people. For this reason the Council strongly advocates the active consultation and negotiation by government and non-government sectors with young people.

In essence these strategies suggest a shift of focus from the law as a protective mechanism to the law becoming an empowering tool for young people.

The law then is a vital link to the following issues by virtue of it determining the environment of young people. The law protects access to educational, employment, housing, health and income opportunities and participation in society.



## YOUNG PEOPLE AND HEALTH

Young people's health is determined by a multitude of factors. If they are dependent on others, those others determine the young person's health. Factors impinging on a young person's health are the income levels, employment, housing, human relations, education, lifestyle, in short, the total environment, created for and by their carers.

Health is viewed by the Youth Affairs Council of Australia holistically in that equal emphasis is given to a young person's physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and social health. If there is an absence of any one of the factors determining a young person's health, for example, a lack of income or employment, isolation etc, one or all of the dimensions of health will be detrimentally affected. In the same vein if all these factors are present young people's overall well-being will be enhanced.

As young people's health is influenced by a variety of factors so does their health impinge on their other parts of their lives, that is, employment, self esteem, human relations and so on. Thus because young people's well-being is an important determinant in their transitional phase to adulthood, the need for overall good health is essential.

However, currently many young people are suffering from ill health as evidenced by such health problems as obesity, anorexia nervosa, drug abuse and so on. For this reason the Youth Affairs Council of Australia has advocated a number of strategies to reduce the incidence of ill-health among young people.

These include the need to provide more resources to promote well-being as an effort to reduce the incidence of ill-health among young people.

Most importantly there is a need to provide more resources to promote well-being as an effort to prevent the factors which induce ill health, for example, an anti-smoking campaign.

For health promotion to be effective research needs to be conducted on the health needs of young people, particularly on basic access to health services with a focus on the disadvantaged populations. Comprehensive consultation with young people is also required, from the inception, through to implementation and evaluation of programmes.

Schools, along with the workplace and other social settings, are an ideal medium for the development of a "Health for Life" curriculum which informs young people of what constitutes a healthy body and of the stages of life development. In conjunction with such a programme, empowering courses should be

introduced to develop young people's self confidence and enable them to take control over their bodies and their lives. In programmes such as these, as in other areas, simple, straightforward information should be developed, in conjunction with young people, and then distributed.

Health services also need to be established in centres which are accessible to young people, that is, open, free, informal and non-threatening. Such centres should reflect an holistic view of health by integrating health services such as medical care and counselling and so on. For this to occur the government needs to both consult with the community organisations and to help fund community health initiatives.

Strategies such as these need to be incorporated in either the development of a national youth-specific health policy or the development of a youth-specific component into the National Health Strategy.

Health initiatives such as those advocated by the Council will both enhance young people's control over their own bodies and their well-being.

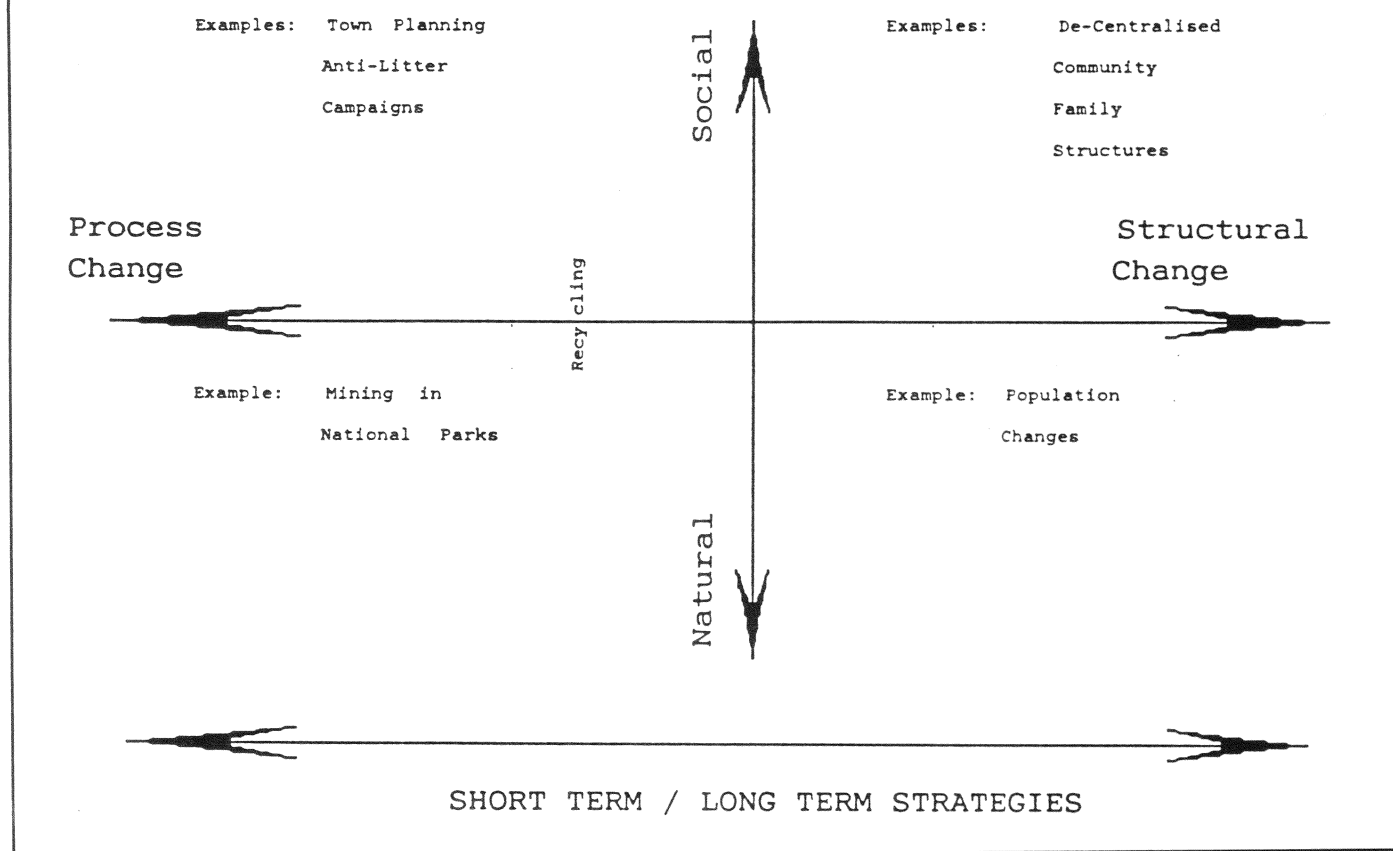
This interlinking of young people's "environments" provides impetus for the Youth Affairs Council of Australia contention that "fashionable" environmental definitions should be broadened to include both the immediate environment and its social, economic and physical dimensions. In this, like elsewhere, the Council is adopting an holistic outlook to the environment. The environmental issue then is viewed as multidimensional, or in graphic terms, on a grid (see Figure 1) demonstrating that there needs to be balances between the urban and the natural, society and conservation, long and short term strategies and process and structural change.

If the environment is to be understood in this context young people need both information and education. The Council advocates that young people be given access to information which is understandable and relevant. For this to occur young people need to be involved in the process of gathering and distributing information. In addition, young people need to be educated to enable an understanding of the political and policy processes that create the environment in which they live. With this knowledge and participation young people should be consulted on all matters concerning the future, as everything ultimately impacts on the environment.

This environment for young people then is perceived as being significantly constituted by the complex body of rights enshrined in legislation; the health and well-being of its residents; the range, diversity and quality of housing; the appropriateness of its educational institutions and opportunities; the



FIGURE: 1 CHARTING ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE



productivity and satisfaction inscribed in work; and the equitable access to income that ensures the quality of all these elements.

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

Whether compulsory or post-compulsory, education is a substantial component in all young people's lives. Many young people attending educational institutions are at the turning point in their transitional process between dependence and independence. Their educational experience then can be very influential in determining how successfully they achieve their transition.

The Youth Affairs Council of Australia proposes a number of strategies which can assist young people in their transition via the education process. The Council believes that the compulsory and post-compulsory education experiences of young people should be consistent and relevant to the broader community. In addition, education should provide the broader community. In addition, education should provide the broad-ranging knowledge and transferable skills that will enable young people to both participate in society and adjust successfully to its changing

landscape. An 'Education for Life' programme which informs young people about citizenship, and other social relationships is necessary for the realisation of such a goal.

The Council believes that an education system which prepares young people for the changing relationship of the workforce to society, needs to be integrated and balanced between learning, experience and assessment. An integrated system which offers a variety of suitable teaching style and models and takes into consideration the learning styles and abilities of its individual students offers a more accessible and relevant education system. The Council also recognizes that education is an ongoing process and not just restricted to the years of compulsory attendance. Thus there is the realisation that if Australia is to establish economic and social stability all young people need to have equitable access to participate in educational pathways which lead to accredited and desired outcomes. This is perceived as essential in achieving the transitional step into the workforce and adulthood.

Local and industrial communities, therefore, need to be actively involved in the learning process, and specialist staff employed to encourage equal



participation so that young people have the confidence and opportunity to realize their educational, community and recreational potential.

This strategy will work towards removing unnecessary barriers between education, training and employment paths, in addition to removing current anomalies which prevent young people following their desired paths. In creating an education system which relates the differing needs of young people to a continually changing society, there will be the recognition that educational institutions are an important part of the community rather than simply institutions in isolation.

Education then is a major avenue in influencing young people's access and use of the law, health and

health services, availability of housing, treatment of the environment, employment opportunities and the source and level of their income.

## YOUNG PEOPLE, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Currently employment is the conventional method of obtaining the income which enables young people to become independent. For this reason employment is an essential and integral component of the latter stages of the transitional process. Without it, young people continue to be dependent on either their carers/family of the welfare state.

The Youth Affairs Council of Australia recognises the need for all young people to have opportunities to enter the labour market via adequate paid employment. Such employment should offer career development through the training and skill formation which is considered essential to outcomes that include permanent employment. With this there needs to be a concerted effort to adapt to social change by examining the inter-connected roles of technology, work and education. Appropriate career choice and development can then be achieved if there is a range of mixes of school, work and training.

There needs to be an acceptance from the community that programmes at a local level enable young people to contribute to the local community, and enhance and direct their career choices and opportunities. Local employment initiatives within familiar and supportive conditions could ease the many pressures young people face while preparing for other employment. Federal government initiatives which encourage major employer groups to develop and establish training packages would also be welcomed. Any labour market programmes, whether directed by the community or federal government need to be career-oriented and directed towards achievable work outcomes.

The importance of permanent employment can not be over emphasised. Not only is it an essential stepping stone for young people to adult status, it provides the income to enable young people to participate fully in society and plays a large part in contributing to young people's self-esteem. Therefore the Youth Affairs Council of Australia strongly advocates the strengthening of opportunities for training that leads to satisfying employment.

Employment then is seen as essential to obtaining adult status in that it determines young people's levels of income, type of education, access to housing, young people's overall health and access to the law. In short, it is the key to quality environment.

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND INCOMES

Young people can not achieve adult status without the independent income which can enable young people to live at a reasonable standard of living and participate in society. This income can be in the form of wages, salary, benefits or pensions. The receipt of income as a consequence of paid work is considered normal and desirable in this society.

More specifically, young people need an appropriate income in order for them to access and participate effectively within the adult community. At present many young people are paid junior wages to compensate for a perceived lack of skills, experience and knowledge in the workplace. In reality, young working people should receive equal pay for equal work of equal worth, or, in addition to compensate for the lesser wage, worthwhile training. Junior wages are only defensible if the employers offer training packages for young people to further develop their skills and market value for permanent and future employment. Concessions for basic needs would also be essential as training does not prevent the inclusion of adult living costs. An inadequate income limits the range of young people's needs that can be fulfilled.

Essentially then, need, qualifications and experience should determine the level of income support, not age. Young people do not receive concessions in transport, housing, training etc yet income support is set at a lower rate for young people, thus assuming that young people have lower living costs than their adult counterparts and parental support.

It is for this reason that the Youth Affairs Council of Australia advocates an adequate income which ensures that a young person can achieve at least an acceptable minimum standard of living. For a young person to seek a productive place in the community, participate fully in society, pursue social equality and have confidence to direct their own lives and futures, such a guarantee is essential.

Because young people do not always have access to private/family support such support should not be assumed. Young people need to be treated individually with specific needs and conditions, and not simply as a collective mass with the same underestimated needs.

It should also be recognized that in the next thirty years Australia's working age population will increase, producing additional competition for young people to obtain full time employment. This exacerbates the need for increased employment opportunities, and in the likelihood that full employment cannot be achieved, adequate income support is essential to allow young people to participate in society, whether it be through further training, education or involvement in their local community, or preferably all three.

## Consumer Credit - Its Connections with Income Inadequacy

If young people do not receive an adequate income with which to achieve adult status, the pressure to conform to the status of adulthood results in young people seeking alternative forms of income support. This alternative is often consumer credit because of its availability.

Hence, an area of growing concern in the area of youth policy, which is interlinked to incomes policy, is consumer credit. Young people are increasingly using consumer credit in the form of finance and insurance arrangements, credit and store cards, personal loans and finance companies.

This consumer credit is then being increasingly used by young people to acquire food and clothing, which represents a shift from their traditional use, that is, consumer durables such as a car, stereo or television.

The major concern is the devastating effect of the overuse of credit facilities by young people. This overuse is likely to be attributable to two factors. The first of these is an inadequate income where credit is being used to purchase basic items such as food and clothing. The second is a lack of knowledge when entering credit agreements. Many young people over-commit themselves in such agreements as the result of being unaware of the obligations in the agreement. Financial difficulties of this nature can cause other problems such as homelessness as a consequence of young people being unable to meet housing costs due to their over-commitment to credit.

A direct result of over-commitment for young people is bankruptcy, if not immediately, in the near future, and this is increasingly the outcome for such young people.

The Youth Affairs Council of Australia advocates a framework to prevent young people exceeding their means by entering into credit agreements they do not understand.

It is essential then that educational material and information about consumer credit and the obligations and consequences of such agreements is disseminated to young people and understood by them. For this reason it would be important for young people to be involved in the development of such material, that is, its subject matter, content etc.

To enable young people to be informed about consumer credit workers with youth, for example, youth workers, teachers, shop stewards etc also need to be trained to support, assist or convey information on consumer credit.

Related to this initiative is the need for research to ascertain young people's saving patterns and levels as opposed to their levels of borrowing. This information could be used in a preventative format by developing incentives for young people to save, for example, special savings accounts without credit facilities.

Connected with informing young people about consumer credit is the need to enforce laws that protect young people's rights as consumers. Just as important is the need to develop national uniform credit legislation. Young people can over-commit themselves by virtue of moving inter-state and being subject to different credit legislation and interest rates, of which they may be unaware.

It is a major concern to the Council that young people are using credit facilities as an alternative income support mechanism. Until young people are given adequate income support the abuse of consumer credit will continue and increase.

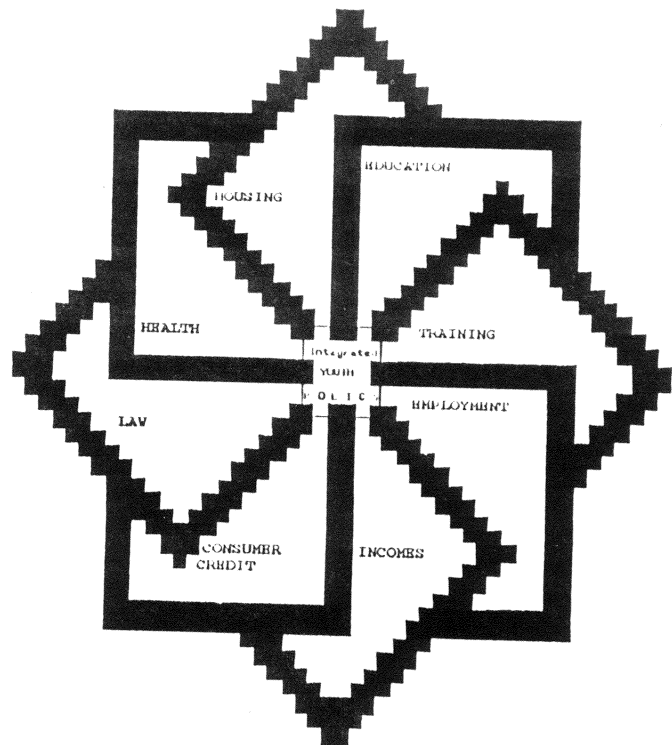
Incomes then are a key component in creating young people's access to employment, education, housing, health and law services, thereby also determining their involvement in environmental issues. The common saying 'money makes the world go round' could not be truer.

### THE YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA'S INTEGRATED POLICY

The Youth Affairs Council of Australia advocates an holistic or integrated approach to youth policy, as illustrated in Diagram 1. Diagram 1 attempts to convey the relationships between law, health, housing, environment, education, employment and training and incomes as impinging on all young people, thus contributing to an integrated youth policy. All of the above issues are perceived to overlap one another - either directly or indirectly - and merge to determine the pace and quality of the transitional process young people face from school/education to paid work and adulthood. However, at the same time each issue raises specific areas of concern and strategies are required to alleviate problem areas.

This paper has focussed on how each issue impacts or determines the transitional process for young people. However, it is equally important to examine how particular characteristics of the young population also determine their access to and participation in employment, education, housing and so on. Young people face disadvantage as a result of their age. They can also face added discrimination by virtue of their

DIAGRAM 1: YACA POLICY WHEEL



race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, ableness, locality and their sexuality. However, in the current economic environment even those people who are not disadvantaged in terms of the above are suffering from a lack of access and participation in education, incomes and so on. Hence access and participation are determined by both the young people population and by the structure or provision of housing, the law, employment etc. **Because this paper focuses on integration it does not detail how sub-groups of the youth population affect and are affected by the issues under examination.** However this is examined in each respective discussion document.

In keeping with the integrated approach, the Youth Affairs Council of Australia strongly recommends that all services that meet young people's needs are both coordinated and integrated. This can be achieved by housing all such services in the one location or local community which should enhance communication and coordination between the services. This reflects the belief that young people's transitional needs are many, varied and interlinked and cannot be dealt with effectively in isolation. Such an integration of services also acknowledges and supports the concept that the whole economic, physical and social system creates disadvantages and advantages. Therefore it is the system which must be shaped to produce equality, not specific disadvantaged groups.