

YOUNG WOMEN

Our Right to Good Health



Proceedings from Young Women's Speakout

13 October 1993

A Project of WAYWARD
Women Alongside Young Women for Action, Research and Development

Auspiced by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc

YOUNG WOMEN

Our Right to Good Health

Proceedings from Young Women's Speakout

13 October 1993

A Project of WAYWARD

Women Alongside Young Women for Action, Research and Development

Auspiced by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc

Written by Angie Dunbavan with the assistance of Corrie Macdonald.
Desktop publishing by Corrie Macdonald.
Published in February 1994 by WAYWARD.
For more information phone (07) 852 1800.
Copyright WAYWARD.

WAYWARD thanks all those who attended and contributed to the success of the Speakout.
Special thanks to:

Young Women: Sarina, Sharyn, Vinnie, Debbie, Tristhan, Rosemary, Adrianna, Glenda, Jeromie, Carol, Kim, Rachelle, Karin, Chantal, Kathy, Amanda, Ronda, Mona, Marlene, Allison, Kymberley, Niky, Kathy, Angela, Annette, Nikki, Vicki, Mikki, Colleen, Bekky, Fiona, Danielle, Paula, Kirstin, Christine, Tracey, Nikki, Elka, Charmaine, Desleigh, Fabiana, Ria, Nikki, Melinda, Tanya, Wendy, and Peta.

Support Workers: Margaret Joughin, Janine Erb, Louise MacDonald, Sue Lloyd, Lisa Owen, Julie Grace, Pat M, Carol Le Brock, Sarah Hilton, Kris Prickett, Bindi Wythes, Ronnie Spender, Kerry Schoenfish, Di Farrell, Lara Pike, Fiona Rich, Susan Hassell, Helen Latemore, Catherine Black, Vivienne Braddock, Judith Rowell, Joanne Symes, Sally Watson, and Angie Dunbavan.

Speakout Coordinator: Angie Dunbavan.

Coordinator's Assistants: Rachel Williams, Janine Erb, and Susan Hassell.

Group Work Facilitators: Michaela Curran, Margaret Joughin, Angie Dunbavan, Fiona Rich, Sarah Hilton and Katrina Jensen.

Guest Speaker: Carmel Blick.

Speakout Facilitator: Corrie Macdonald.

Catering and Venue: The Zoo Cafe - Joc and C..

Childcare Workers: Rebecca Bellotti, Sharyn Stringer, Rachel Williams, Janine Erb, and Susan Hassell.

All members of WAYWARD.

WAYWARD gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Queensland Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing, which funded the speakout as a Youth Week project under its Youth Services Development Grants Program.

Contents

Introduction	1
Leadup to the speakout	2
Details of the day	3
Young women speak	5
Sarina	
Melinda	
Marlene	
Lisa	
Amanda	
Kathy	
Carol	
Kathy	
Christine	
Tanya	
Wendy	
Kymberley	
Mothers from Hell	
Young women's health rights (Address by Health Rights Commission)	11
Small groups	12
Talking to health professionals	13
Sample bags	14
Evaluation	14
Conclusions	15
Appendix 1	
Descriptions of WAYWARD, YANQ and IYS	17
Appendix 2	
Agencies accompanying young women to the speakout	18

Introduction

Background

In March 1993, WAYWARD applied successfully for a Youth Week grant to hold its third young women's speakout. Because WAYWARD is not incorporated, the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) auspiced the project. Inala Youth Service (IYS) provided an office for the speakout Coordinator. Appendix 1 gives more details about WAYWARD, YANQ and IYS.

WAYWARD held its first young women's speakout during Youth Week in November 1992, focusing on the theme "Young Women - Responsible Decision Makers". The theme for WAYWARD's second speakout, in June 1993, was "Young Women - Who Are We?". At both of these events, young women and workers supported further speakouts.

The third speakout was planned as part of Youth Week 1993. The theme for Youth Week was "Young People - Healthy Decision Makers", so WAYWARD adopted "Young Women - Our Right to Good Health" as the theme for the speakout. WAYWARD members were aware of a number of health issues particularly affecting young women, which had been identified in various studies, youth health policies, and anecdotes recounted by young women and workers. They knew that many young women felt uncomfortable using mainstream health services and that even women's health services often did not meet young women's needs. Members hoped that the speakout would be a way of further exploring these and other health issues affecting young women. WAYWARD defined the word "health" broadly, understanding it to encompass physical, mental, emotional and social well-being.

Objectives

- (1) To hold a one-day speakout, in a safe, comfortable environment, where young women who use community services can identify and "speak out" about their experiences with health professionals and to make recommendations to them.
- (2) To maximise the involvement of young women in the speakout, including young women from groups which are often marginalised (e.g. Aboriginal and Islander and non-English speaking background communities, women with disabilities, etc).
- (3) To involve a variety of health care professionals as participants.
- (4) To document and distribute the proceedings of the speakout.

Anticipated outcomes

- (1) Young women participating will have the chance to improve their sense of self-esteem and self-worth through speaking out and being heard.
- (2) Other young women will benefit as health professionals gain insight and respond to young women's health experiences and needs.
- (3) The speakout will encourage increased involvement in WAYWARD's activities by young women from marginalised groups.
- (4) The information shared at the speakout will help to ensure that WAYWARD's future activities are responsive to young women using services.

The grant did not include an allocation for wages to coordinate the organisation of the speakout. Therefore, WAYWARD raised money to employ social worker Angie Dunbavan as Project Coordinator.

Leadup to the speakout

The speakout Coordinator began work in mid-August, approximately six weeks before the speakout was to be held. The Coordinator was assisted by social work student, Rachel Williams, and social science student, Janine Erb, both placed at Inala Youth Service, and social science student, Susan Hassell, placed at St Mary's Supported Accommodation Service.

Youth Week centred on young people and health. The Coordinator, in consultation with other WAYWARD members, decided to focus the speakout on "Young Women - Our Right to Good Health". This theme helped to develop a positive and empowering focus for the day, giving young women and workers an opportunity to meet and share information about their health experiences.

In keeping with previous speakouts, this speakout was declared a women-only event. Feedback from participants in past speakouts had suggested that they welcomed the opportunity to speak in an all-women group and would have felt inhibited by the presence of men.

The Coordinator and WAYWARD members had decided at the previous speakout that only those workers who were supporting young women, or assisting with speakout tasks, could attend the speakout, as the presence of uninvolved "observers" might inhibit the spontaneity of the young women participating, and make them feel that they were "under the microscope". However, after the last speakout, many participants expressed a need to communicate more directly with the government and non-government decision-makers influencing their lives. Therefore, the Coordinator, in consultation with WAYWARD members, decided that it would be appropriate to involve health professionals as "listeners" at the close of the speakout, enabling young women to speak about their experiences with health professionals and make recommendations to them.

There was also a strong feeling that it was important to share the findings of the speakout with other workers. Therefore, the group decided that the report of the proceedings should be widely distributed to workers and health professionals in government and community agencies.

Evidence from previous speakouts confirmed that most young women were eager to participate in fun and practical workshops but that some wanted workshops with a more overtly political focus. Therefore, the Coordinator and other WAYWARD members felt that most of the workshops for this speakout should focus on task-orientated activities, but some should aim to raise young women's awareness of their health rights, and assist them to develop specific recommendations for health service providers. These latter workshops would assist young women to speak to health professionals after the small groups.

Budget constraints did not allow for the payment of facilitators to run the small groups, so the Coordinator networked with WAYWARD members to engage them as voluntary facilitators. The Coordinator also arranged for a WAYWARD member to act as facilitator for the day and for a guest speaker from the Queensland Health Rights Commission to address young women about their health rights. The Coordinator was also responsible for making practical arrangements such as venue hire and catering.

Once the essential details of the day were organised, the coordinating team designed a letter of invitation, a flyer advertising the speakout, and a speakout preparation sheet to assist young women in focussing their discussions on the day. These were sent to approximately 50 South East Queensland agencies which have contact with young women.

The coordinating team also sent a letter of invitation, with accompanying information about WAYWARD, to approximately 20 peak health bodies which work directly and indirectly with young women. Health professionals were invited to attend the speakout from 3.00pm - 4.30pm, so that young women could speak directly to them about their needs and experiences.

Follow-up telephone calls were made to young women's agencies and health professionals to explain the speakout in more detail, and to encourage young women and health professionals to attend. RSVPs were sought in the week prior to the speakout. Over 100 RSVPs were received.

Details of the day

Date and venue

The speakout was held from 9.30am - 4.30pm on Wednesday 13 October. This date was chosen because it fell within Youth Week and because WAYWARD members felt it was the most appropriate weekday for the majority of young women with whom they had contact. The venue was the Zoo Cafe, in Fortitude Valley, an inner-city suburb. It was chosen because:

- it was the venue for the last speakout, so many young women knew it and associated it with the speakout;
- it was centrally located and near to public transport;
- it was reasonably priced, and could cater for the event;
- it had a youthful, informal atmosphere, which included pool tables; and
- its proprietors supported the event and provide a women-friendly atmosphere at all times.

Feedback from the previous speakout indicated that the Zoo had three weaknesses as a venue: high levels of inner-city traffic noise which made some speakers difficult to hear, lack of appropriate childcare facilities, and steep flights of stairs which made access difficult for women with prams or with certain physical disabilities. Many other venues were investigated, but none could provide all that the Zoo offered *and* alleviate these difficulties. WAYWARD decided to work with the Zoo to address these problems. The effect of traffic noise was minimised by re-arranging the room and providing a roving microphone. More energy was put into making the childcare area comfortable and providing resources for the children being cared for. Volunteers were enlisted to assist people with stairs if they had any difficulties. WAYWARD members also decided that, at the beginning of the speakout, the speakout facilitator should explain the efforts which had been made to deal with the concerns which had been raised about the venue.

Program

The following program was planned for the day:

- 9.30 Informal introductions, registration, and coffee/tea/food and music
- 10.00 Welcome and introductions (*facilitator*)
- 10.15 Inspirational talk (*Sarina Van Wyk, young woman from Inala Youth Service*)
- 10.30 Presentations (*young women*)
Discussion from the floor
- 12.00 Lunch and free pool
- 1.00 Young women's health rights (*Carmel Blick, Health Rights Commission*)
- 1.15 Small groups (*young women, workers and group facilitators*)
Art, drama, screenprinting, alternative medicine, health rights, recommendations
- 2.45 Afternoon tea
Arrival of health professionals
- 3.00 Introduction to health professionals (*facilitator*)
- 3.15 Presentations to health professionals (*young women*)
Discussion from the floor
- 4.15 Sample bags and Evaluation
- 4.30 Close

Participants

Approximately 105 women attended the speakout over the entire day, about 60 of whom were young women. Approximately 35 of the remainder were workers who attended to support young women, or to assist in the organisation of the day's events. The young women and workers came because of their contact with a variety of agencies. The agencies which accompanied young women to the speakout are described in appendix 2 of this report. The remaining 10 participants were health professionals who attended in the latter part of the speakout to listen to young women's health experiences and recommendations.

Introductions

The facilitator (Corrie Macdonald - a WAYWARD member) began the day by giving a brief description of WAYWARD and its reasons for holding the speakout. She then introduced Sarina Van Wyk, a young woman affiliated with Inala Youth Service, to give a short "inspirational" talk. Sarina had attended both of the previous speakouts and had spoken at each. Sarina accepted the Coordinator's invitation to give an overview of what speakouts meant for her and what was likely to occur during the day. WAYWARD members felt it was important that a young woman set the tone for the day and put at ease young women who had never before attended a speakout. Sarina's address is reproduced in the next section, along with those of the other young women who spoke.

After Sarina's address, the facilitator discussed the practical details of the day, including explaining why WAYWARD had chosen to hold the speakout at the Zoo and what had been done to minimise the concerns about the venue which had been raised previously. She also ran through the program and explained WAYWARD's expectations for the day. Many of the issues discussed at speakouts are controversial, and WAYWARD members knew that not all young women present would necessarily agree with all the statements made. Therefore, members had decided beforehand that the facilitator should explain that it was OK for young women to disagree with each other, but that everyone present had the right to be treated with respect and should not be interrupted or attacked. The facilitator did this, and also explained that WAYWARD was trying to create a "safe space" for young women to develop confidence in speaking out about important issues. The young women present seemed to respond positively to these principles.

The facilitator then invited participants to take part in a brief, non-threatening "get to know you" exercise. She asked everyone to approach someone they didn't know, introduce themselves, and say something about themselves and why they had come to the speakout. This exercise was to help prepare young women to speak to an unfamiliar group and to energise participants before they spoke. Participants did the exercise three times, and most young women were happy to participate.

When this exercise was finished, everyone sat down again and the facilitator invited young women to come forward and speak out about any issue related to "health", in the broadest sense of the word.

Young women speak

Sarina

Good morning everyone. Some of you might know from the last speakouts that my name is Sarina Van Wyk and I'm presently studying an Aboriginal and Islander Welfare course at Kangaroo Point TAFE. Like Corrie said, I'm here today to tell you what the last two speakouts were about and what you should expect about today.

The first speakout was about responsible decision making and the second speakout was about anything you wanted to talk about.

This speakout is about health. Health means to me a healthy body and mind. This speakout gives us the opportunity to talk about our health and I encourage all of you to get up and speak. It may seem scary at first but no-one here will make fun of what you say and we'll all listen and try to support you. So feel free to get up at any time and say what you like.



Melinda

I don't like men doctors. I prefer lady doctors. I don't like men doctors touching me. They hurt sometimes. My doctor calls me darling and I don't like that.

Marlene

I go to the doctor often. Some can't help me - they don't know what the problem is. I prefer to go to female than male doctors because I don't trust male doctors at all. Maybe women doctors know more than men doctors but I don't know. You should go to a doctor that you know because they know what your problem is.

Discussion: *The majority of participants agreed that they preferred to have contact with female doctors rather than male doctors because they felt that female doctors were often more sensitive to women-specific health issues. The group expressed concerns that it was often difficult to find female specialists - even more difficult than female GPs, for instance.*

During the discussion, Melinda and Marlene noted that asserting yourself with a health professional was often very difficult for young women with an intellectual disability, because health professionals often thought they weren't capable of participating knowledgably in their own health care. Marlene also pointed out that not all young women had a choice about which doctor they went to; in many cases, their parents decided and they had to go along with it. She said this was especially true for young women with intellectual disabilities.

Lisa

Lisa was a worker nominated by the group from her agency to speak about a recent incident.

Recently, I was supporting a young woman at the Royal Women's Hospital where she was taken due to what was thought to be labour pains.

The young woman was 31 weeks gestation at the time and felt as though the doctor was treating her with no respect or dignity during the session. The male doctor used aggressive language when speaking to the young woman. When asking questions he would not give her the chance to answer and pre-empted judgemental statements e.g. "What do you do for a job? - I suppose you stay home and look after the kids?".

He referred to her as a "cheap human incubator", and refused to acknowledge her fear of needles, attempting to push her into having needless injections. There were also several other statements made that made this young woman feel unworthy of treatment.

The young woman spoke to a female doctor, as there was a shift change happening, and when the male doctor returned he treated the young woman differently, which left her wondering whether the female doctor had spoken to him to encourage his change of attitude.

Discussion: *Other participants recounted experiences where doctors had spoken to them in a derogatory manner. Many felt angry about this but also said they were reluctant to voice their disapproval to health professionals because of the intimidating and unfamiliar environment of most health settings.*

Amanda

My name is Amanda Roza. I am here today to talk to you about Young Parents Program.

There is a social worker, housing worker and midwife. There is a group run just for young pregnant women on a Tuesday morning up at the Royal Women's Hospital. Transport is also given if you turn up regularly.

After you have had your baby there is a group called the Young Mum's Group on a Thursday afternoon. We have lunch and afternoon tea. We have free babysitting if you would like to get away from your child in the afternoon.

We sit down and talk about all different things. If you have any trouble with your child we have a midwife/child health nurse there if you need someone to talk to. We also have a social worker that will talk to you in confidence if you have any trouble with your boyfriend etc.

The Young Mum's Group participates in various activities which include: child discipline, kids' milestones, batik printing, health seminars. We also have fun things to do which include swimming and safe sex workshops. This gives young mums a chance to mingle, make new friends and also have a break from the kids for a while.

Discussion: Young women discussed other young parents groups, including the Windsor Playgroup and the Young Parents Group at Inala Youth Service, and invited young women to attend these groups if they wished.



Kathy

My name is Kathy and I'm just going to make a few comments about what's great about being a young mum.

Firstly, I'd like to say that I'm glad that I had my son while I was young because I feel as though I have so much energy, enthusiasm and time for him. We spend lots of quality time together, as well as learning - him about life and me about being a mother.

Because memories of my own upbringing are so fresh, I feel that I am more determined than older women to make sure that my son has everything I never had and to raise him with more success and understanding than my parents raised me.

Being a mum is a trial and error experience, but I wouldn't pass it up for the world. I love my son and I'm going to do my best in raising him.

One thing I know though is that he will have all the love, attention, guidance and discipline he could ever want or need.

Discussion: *Other young women expressed their sense of fulfilment and enjoyment about being young and being a mother. The group strongly disagreed with stereotypical messages that young parents cannot be "good" parents, and that having a baby at a young age was necessarily bad for a woman's emotional or physical health. Some young women said that they felt being young and strong made parenting less physically draining than would otherwise be the case.*

Carol

Carol was a worker who wished to raise an issue for young women to address.

My name is Carol, I work at Young Parents Program as a midwife. Every day in my job, I come in contact with domestic violence.

Last year I did some research into domestic violence and its prevalence in young women's groups in Brisbane. The findings of my research were later confirmed by a study of domestic violence done at the Royal Women's Hospital which showed that teenagers were abused more often than any other age group.

This week the Department of Family Services has announced that it has funding to establish five Domestic Violence Centres, two of which will be located in Brisbane. As young women have special needs and are such a high risk group, I believe that it would be appropriate for one of these centres to be resourced as a Young Women's Domestic Violence Centre. I would like to invite the young women here today to speak out about what I have said, because domestic violence is a very important health issue.

Discussion: *Sue Lloyd, from St Mary's Supported Accommodation Service, agreed with Carol about the need for specific domestic violence services for young women. She said that many of the young women she worked with had been in relationships where domestic violence occurred, or had grown up in families with domestic violence.*

Other workers agreed that this was common in the youth sector and that young women often fall through the gaps of services which are mainly aimed at older women who are married or in de facto relationships.

Kerry Schoenfisch, from the Gold Coast Youth Service, said that services need to be adequately funded to enable them to respond to young people at times of crisis, rather than having to put them on a waiting list. She felt this was particularly relevant to relationship counselling, where waiting periods can entrench people in a cycle of violence and mean issues are not addressed until another violent incident occurs.

Many of the young women supported these comments and urged that youth-specific domestic violence services be established. Some young women pointed out that such services would need to "reach out" to young women who couldn't or wouldn't go to them - for example, through telephone services or detached work.

Participants called for a mixture of programs, including small, self-help groups for young women and individualised, one-to-one counselling. Many were concerned that effort should also be put into preventing domestic violence, and called for more places for couples to go and receive support and counselling.

This discussion prompted two young women to talk about their experiences of women's refuges.

Kathy

I think that there is a genuine need, in the community, for a domestic violence shelter especially for young women.

The shelters which are active at the moment cater to older, married women, and tend to make young women feel uncomfortable and unwanted. I say this from experience - an horrific experience I will share today.

A few years ago, I was involved in a relationship with a domineering, arrogant, violent man several years older than myself and I found myself trapped. I was too terrified to leave, yet continuously put up with broken bones, black eyes etc.

One night I gathered the courage to leave after a particularly violent evening and made my way to a refuge. Once inside I was made to feel small - like a child - like I had no place being there. I left, stupidly, and went back to this man's house - I had nowhere else to go!

When I walked in the door, I was stabbed twice and spent several weeks in hospital.

We need, and are calling for, shelters for young women.

THIS KIND OF SITUATION CAN BE AVOIDED!

Christine

As a young woman with a baby I went to a women's refuge. I felt I was treated badly and looked down on because I was young with a baby.

Discussion: *The group voiced support for Kathy, Christine and other young women in this type of situation and agreed with Kathy's recommendation for shelters for young women.*

Tanya

I was 22 years with three kids and went to the doctor's to ask for contraception. He refused to prescribe it because of his own beliefs. He said the pill wasn't safe but didn't offer any other form, even though I asked him about them.

I don't feel that he had the right to do that - it wasn't his right to choose my fate. I have since had a fourth child which indirectly is a result of his refusing to prescribe a repeat of the pill prescribed at the hospital after the birth of my third child.

Discussion: *Other participants related stories about the difficulty of accessing contraception through some health professionals. Many young women felt that it was not right for doctors to express and enforce their own moral beliefs in these situations.*

Wendy

A couple of years ago a cyst grew in my neck. I went to see a doctor about it and he said that it had developed as a result of an infection related to the stud in my nose. I believe that as my stud was not infected that he was being prejudiced towards me.

Discussion: *Many young women said that health professionals often made them feel uncomfortable about their appearance and/or age when they approached them seeking help. One young woman said a doctor had once accused her of being a drug addict, purely on the basis of her appearance, when she was seeking help for her child on a totally unrelated health issue. Young women felt that it was not appropriate for health professionals to make negative comments of this type.*

Kymberley

For the past five years or so I have seen numerous doctors because I have been getting sickness after sickness after sickness. I feel that males in general feel they have the right to be domineering over women. Doctors all have the idea that because they are professionals they too have this right. But no matter how professional they may like to be, it isn't in my opinion professional to stand over people (women) because they aren't bothered to look into the issues to find the real problem. I now, thanks to one competent and thorough doctor, have started chemotherapy and at last have peace of mind.

In remembrance: this is for Natalie. I am disgusted with a doctor I know. My friend Nat died not long ago because of this doctor's mistake. Natalie, a lovely young lady who suffered trauma from seeing someone being brutally murdered, was diagnosed with schizophrenia and treated accordingly. Nat tried to tell the nursing staff of this trauma but was treated with pure ignorance. Natalie just wanted to be free of her pain: I only wish that these so called professionals had really listened to Nat and I only hope that Nat is now a free and saved spirit.

Mothers from Hell

The Mothers from Hell were introduced by Bekky who explained that they were a dance group formed through the Inala Community Theatre and the Young Parents Group at Inala Youth Service. Bekky said that the group had recently performed for seven nights at the Inala Community Theatre and at the Princess Theatre in Woolloongabba. She said the group was a wonderful experience because young parents got to meet lots of people and it was exciting because there were approximately 100 people watching each night. The Mothers From Hell performed a very funky dance routine, and received a big round of applause. Members then introduced themselves individually:

My name is Bekky and I choreographed this dance. I have two children.

My name is Christine and I am a mother of one.

My name is Colleen. I am the mother of one and I am expecting another baby in January. I've just started an Adult Re-entry course at Inala High School.

My name is Dannielle. I am a mother and a full-time student at Inala High School.

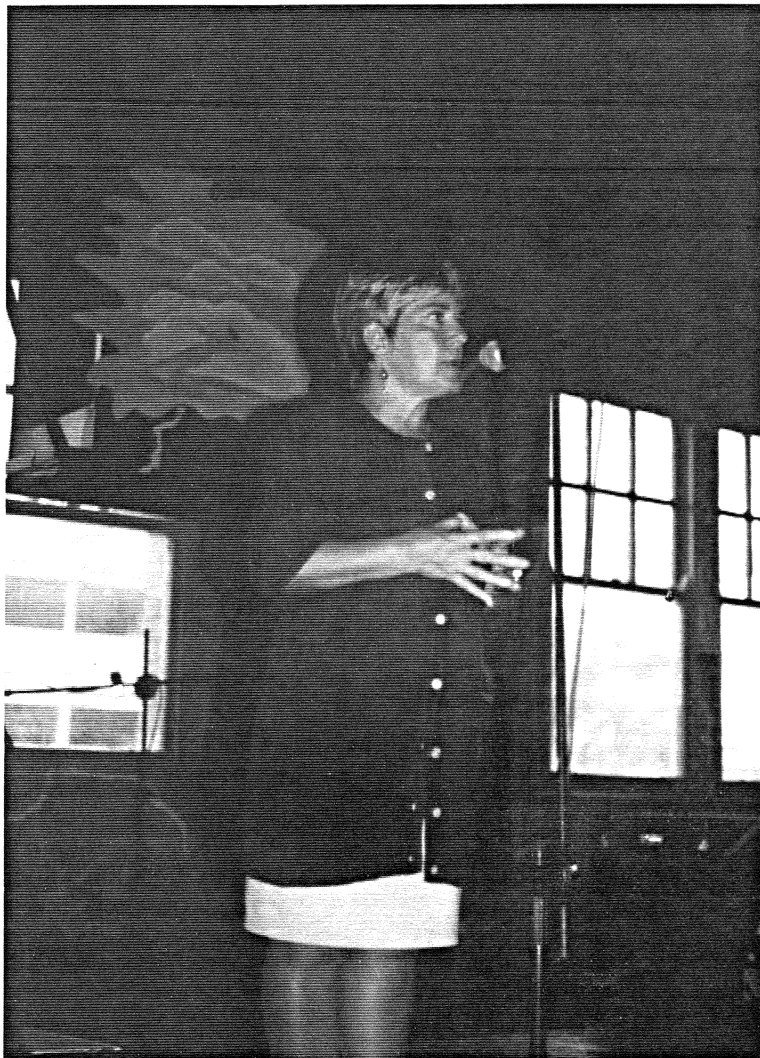


Young women's health rights

Carmel Blick

Carmel Blick, a guest speaker from the Health Rights Commission, spent some time identifying the health issues discussed in the morning session. She then gave the group information about some of their health rights. Carmel emphasised that young women have the right to:

- * access information about their health
- * choose who to disclose information to
- * access personal files held by doctors in public hospitals
- * know what a doctor is going to do (procedure) and to know the risks involved
- * know about and participate in decisions



Carmel explained that, if these rights are violated, young women can contact the Health Rights Commission to record a complaint. The complaint will then be sent to the health professional asking them to respond. If the response is not satisfactory, further action will be taken by the Health Rights Commission. The complaint must be made within 12 months of the violation of the right. Relatives/friends/associates can complain to the Commission on behalf of others. Complaints can be made about anyone who claims to provide a health service including doctors, nurses, psychologists, and alternative health practitioners. Carmel urged participants to contact the Health Rights Commission if they had any enquiries, at:

80 Albert St
Brisbane
Ph: 234 1674

Small groups

The small group workshops were included in the speakout to provide fun, participatory activities for the young women and to give participants the opportunity to develop new skills. The Coordinator was especially keen to develop workshops which would enable young women to learn new skills, an understanding of their health rights and to co-ordinate their responses to health professionals in the afternoon feedback session.

WAYWARD members were engaged as voluntary facilitators, partly because of budget constraints, but particularly for their experience in, and support for, young women's issues, and their skills in the workshop areas.

The objectives for the small group workshops were:

- (1) To encourage interaction and provide a safe, comfortable environment.
- (2) To link young women into a wider, community based network.
- (3) To encourage young women to learn or become involved in activities rather than talking at them.
- (4) To focus on process but also remember the importance of product.
- (5) To link young women's experiences with the nature of the workshops.

Expression, painting and art

This small group was facilitated by Angie Dunbavan and Fiona Rich, a volunteer from Inala Youth Service. It enabled young women to use paintings to illustrate the health issues discussed on the day, and their feelings about these issues. The young women joined together to paint a banner of the speakout. This workshop required imagination, sharing, cooperation and creativity.

Relaxation, movement and drama

This small group was facilitated by Michaela Curran, a worker from Logan Youth and Family Service, and Margaret Joughin, from Inala Youth Service. The group used relaxation, breathing and body tie exercises as a prelude to designing a performance based on word associations related to health. This workshop required imagination and energy, and it enabled young women to learn new relaxation and stress management exercises.

Screenprinting

This small group was facilitated by Sarah Hilton, a worker from Logan Youth and Family Service. Sarah used this workshop to teach young women how to screenprint on T-shirts using a pre-designed logo which incorporated a women's symbol and the word "speakout". The young women then individualised these shirts using different fabric media. This workshop was educationally based while also requiring imagination and creativity of participants.

Health rights and badgemaking

This small group was facilitated by Katrina Jensen, a worker from Brisbane Youth Service. Katrina provided information about young women's health rights and helpful tips when dealing with general practitioners. Participants were also able to design their own badges focussing on health experiences and rights. This workshop was originally described to young women as a "health rights" workshop, and was noticeably unpopular as a result! When young women were informed that it would focus on badge making, its popularity increased.

Alternative health and Recommendations

These two workshops were supposed to be more talk- than task-based, the first discussing alternative health care and the second developing recommendations about health services for young women. No young women participated in either of these workshops and, therefore, they were cancelled.

Talking to health professionals

Approximately 10 representatives from a number of health organisations attended the late afternoon session of the speakout. Organisations represented included the Royal Brisbane Hospital, the Brisbane Women's Health Centre, Shop 101 - Youth Sexual Health Project, Children by Choice, the Brisbane North Adolescent Forensic Health Service, and the Brisbane Rape Crisis Centre.

The facilitator welcomed the health professionals and outlined the events of the day so far. She then summarised the themes contained in the addresses given by the young women and the following discussions, and invited young women to speak further on any issues that concerned them. In some instances, young women stood up and briefly recounted their stories again to illustrate the various themes. The facilitator then invited the young women to present the outcomes of their small groups.



The art, screenprinting and badgemaking groups all displayed their work. The movement and drama group then presented a short performance they had developed. A group of young women stamped rhythmically while calling out health-related words beginning with each letter of the alphabet. The words they chose conveyed clearly the variety of health issues young women face. All presentations received big rounds of applause.

The facilitator then summarised the major points from Carmel Blick's address, and invited the health professionals present to introduce themselves and describe the ways in which their organisations responded to the issue of young women's health rights. Each health professional was happy to do this and, in general, all were very supportive of young women's right to high-quality, appropriate, respectful health services. They described a variety of mechanisms for complaints in the event that young women felt their rights were not being respected by their services. This discussion prompted two young women to comment on the quality of the service they had received from one of the organisations which was represented. One young woman had had a very negative experience; the other had had a very positive experience. This suggested to the group that the quality of the health care young women received often depended more on the philosophy of individual workers than it did on the organisation's philosophy.

The program closed with formal thanks from the facilitator to all who had made the day possible.

Sample bags

At the end of the day, WAYWARD distributed sample bags to the young women involved, as an expression of appreciation for the time and effort they had put in. The sample bags contained a voucher for a free makeover at the Body Shop, condoms from Ansell, mixed fruit bags from Trumps at the Brisbane Markets, stickers, posters and information sheets from Shop 101, sanitary napkins from Johnson & Johnson, Farex baby food samples from the Boots' company, nail polish remover, Ego products and information sheets from Hassell's Pharmacy, stickers and information sheets from Women's Info Link, fruit drinks from UHF, all contained in plastic bags donated by Ego Pharmaceuticals. Young women were generally very happy to receive the sample bags, and thought they were great fun. Special thanks go to all the organisations which contributed to them.

Evaluation

At the end of the day, the facilitator asked all participants in the speakout to write down their opinions and suggestions about the day on pieces of butcher's paper taped along the wall. This form of evaluation had been very successful at the previous speakout.

Unfortunately, however, because it was 4.30pm and many young women (and their children) were tired and anxious to get home, few young women wrote comments on the paper. Therefore, in the weeks following the speakout, the Coordinator contacted workers who had attended and asked them to consult with young women and then forward their feedback on the day. Unfortunately, the Coordinator did not have sufficient time to also contact the health professionals who attended.

The following comments are primarily those of young women, drawn either from the piece of paper, or from information passed on by workers.

Positives

*I had a great day - met heaps of very interesting people, learnt heaps and had fun.
It was good to see some health professionals on our side.
Great organisation!
Speakout was great - it gave us a chance to talk about our health experiences.
I felt safe.
It was interesting and relevant.
I was able to do what I wanted.
Sample bags had lots of information.
The sound system worked well.
Great work, Corrie.
Excellent venue.
I loved the food.
I'm glad there were helpers at the stairs.*

Improvements/Thoughts for Next Time

*The health professionals weren't very visible - it may have helped if they stood up when talking.
More involvement of young women in organisation.
Childcare area could be improved.*

Conclusions

Considering the events of the speakout, and the evaluation comments, WAYWARD members and the Project Coordinator have reached the following broad conclusions.

Objectives

The project successfully achieved most of Objective (1). The speakout was held, the environment was appropriate, and young women spoke freely and in great detail about health-related experiences. The use of a roving microphone meant that more young women than at any previous speakout were able to express their opinions in a way in which they felt comfortable. Because of lack of interest, the small group which was supposed to develop formal "recommendations" did not meet and, therefore, formal recommendations were not presented to the health professionals. However, anecdotes and comments gave very clear messages about the kinds of health services young women would like to see. Furthermore, the facilitator accurately summarised and presented information to the health professionals, and some young women took the opportunity to tell health professionals about their experiences.

Overall, however, relatively few young women spoke directly to health professionals. Therefore, direct dialogue between young women and health professionals proved to be a problematic area in Objective (1). If a similar model is used for future events, more thought needs to be given to ways to facilitate communication between young women and invited guests. It also appears that, although some young women have previously requested "political" workshops, most participants on this occasion preferred fun, hands-on activities.

The project was also largely successful in relation to Objective (2). Attendance numbers were excellent, and representation of young women of NESB and young women with disabilities was good. However, there were very few young women from ATSI backgrounds. As always, WAYWARD will continue to work on this issue. Resources permitting, members would also like to consider ways of involving interested young women in the actual organisation of events like speakouts.

Objective (3) was perhaps the most difficult objective, and results reflected this. WAYWARD is unknown to most mainstream health services, and mainstream health providers (eg GPs) are generally not networked into the community/welfare sector. Therefore it was a challenge to involve a variety of health care professionals as participants. The project succeeded in involving health professionals from community organisations and, to a lesser extent, from government. However, despite efforts, it proved impossible to get mainstream medical practitioners, or their representatives, to attend. Nevertheless, for a first effort, 10 health professionals is an achievement.

Objective (4) will be achieved with the printing and distribution of this report.

Anticipated Outcomes

Feedback on the day and after the speakout indicated that Outcome (1) was achieved: young women enjoyed the experience of speaking out and being listened to, and felt they had achieved something by doing so.

Outcome (2) is more difficult to evaluate. To some extent, the speakout "preached to the converted", as the health professionals it attracted were mainly drawn from the community sector. However, it is to be hoped that health professionals who attended the speakout did gain further insight into their work with young women, and that their organisations' practices may improve as a result. Furthermore, this report will be distributed more widely, with a particular effort to ensure that mainstream health services receive it.

As noted above, young women from some marginalised groups were well-represented at the speakout, but other marginalised groups were not. Those "doubly disadvantaged" young women who did attend will be targeted again for future WAYWARD activities, and hopefully will inform their peers about WAYWARD's activities. Therefore, Outcome (3) is likely to be achieved.

Outcome (4) was achieved. This report, and the events of the speakout, will help to inform future WAYWARD activities and will act as reference materials for any future work WAYWARD does in relation to young women's health. More specifically, the issue of domestic violence was raised at the speakout by workers and young women, and WAYWARD has agreed to consider taking further action on this issue during 1994.

Future

As at previous speakouts, participants were enthusiastic about the day and eager to be involved in further speakouts or other WAYWARD events for young women. Funding permitting, WAYWARD will continue to meet this need whenever possible.

Young women - SPEAK OUT!



Appendix 1

Descriptions of WAYWARD, YANQ and IYS

What is WAYWARD?

WAYWARD (Women Alongside Young Women for Action, Research and Development) is a coalition of women working in Queensland's community sector who in 1991 formed a group to begin addressing the needs of young women using both government and non-government services.

WAYWARD members currently number around 25 and are drawn from agencies which provide information and support to young women or advocate on their behalf on issues including physical and sexual abuse, accommodation, employment, disability, and health and well-being. Women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures other than English-speaking are involved in the group. Meetings are held monthly in and around Brisbane and minutes are sent throughout Queensland as required.

WAYWARD formed because its members were aware that young women face issues and have needs which are very often different from those of either older women or young men. Services frequently fail to acknowledge or respond to this fact and, in some instances, actually aggravate or add to the difficulties confronting young women.

WAYWARD is still in the process of developing a formal statement of goals and objectives. Generally speaking, the group aims to increase awareness of the issues facing young women who are service-users, act as a catalyst for improving service-provision to young women, and increase opportunities for young women's meaningful participation in decision-making which affects them.

So far, WAYWARD's activities have included speakouts, lobbying, submissions, participation in relevant forums, the publication of a book of young women's poetry, and film fundraisers.

WAYWARD meets regularly and is always planning new activities. New members are welcome.

What is YANQ?

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc (YANQ) is the independent, non-government umbrella organisation for groups and individuals from Queensland's youth sector. Its secretariat is based in Brisbane.

YANQ aims to promote the interests and well-being of young people in Queensland, especially disadvantaged young people. It advocates for them to government and the community and encourages the development of policies and programs which are responsive to the needs of young people.

YANQ supports and resources a number of bodies which seek to address issues affecting particular groups of young people. WAYWARD is one such body.

YANQ has auspiced a number of WAYWARD projects, including this speakout.

What is Inala Youth Service?

Inala Youth Service (IYS) is a community organisation based in Inala, a southern suburb of Brisbane. IYS provides accommodation, information, support and advocacy for young people. IYS incorporates specific services for young women and young parents.

IYS provided office space for the Coordinator of the speakout, and two of the Assistant Coordinators.

Appendix 2

Agencies accompanying young women to the speakout

Community Living Program: a community organisation based in Brisbane, which supports young people with a mild intellectual disability to live independently in the community. CLP resources the Wild Women's Group.

Coolock House: a community organisation based in Brisbane, which provides medium-term accommodation and support for parents of all ages who have a child or children under school age.

Elorac House: a neighbourhood centre which resources the residents of Carole Park. The agency is in the process of developing a youth program focussed on recreation and youth issues.

Gold Coast Youth Service: a community organisation based at the Gold Coast which provides welfare and support services to homeless or "at risk" young people aged 12 to 25.

Gympie-Widgee Youth Service: a community organisation based in Gympie which works with young people who are homeless or "at risk". The GWYS runs a young women's network which provides support, information and housing for young women in Gympie who are homeless and "at risk".

Hannah's House: an accommodation and support service based in Ipswich, catering for young women aged 13 to 21 years.

Inala Youth Service: a community organisation based in Brisbane, which provides accommodation, information support and advocacy for young people. IYS incorporates specific services for young women and young parents.

Redback Housing: a community rent scheme project based in Brisbane which provides low-cost rental accommodation to young women and men between 16 and 24 years.

Shop 101: a community organisation based in Ipswich, which provides a comprehensive sexual health service for young people.

St Mary's Supported Accommodation: an organisation based in Brisbane which provides supported on-site accommodation and outreach services to young women in the community, particularly young pregnant and parenting women.

Young Parents' Program: a community organisation based in Brisbane, which provides a health and support service for young pregnant and parenting women.

Youth Housing Project: a community organisation based in Brisbane which provides externally supported accommodation to young women and men aged 16 to 20 years.

Youth and Family Service (Logan): a community organisation based in Logan City which provides health, accommodation, legal, counselling and activities-based services to young people.

Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre: a community organisation based in Brisbane, which provides resources for young women aged 12 to 25 years, and people who work with young women. Individual workers focus on housing and incest support work.

