



youth affairs network qld

**SUBMISSION**

**BY**

**YOUTH AFFAIRS NETWORK OF QUEENSLAND Inc.**  
**(YANQ)**

*in response to the*

*Queensland Government Discussion Paper*

*'Generate' - Youth Participation Charter and Strategy*

Prepared by Bernice Smith, September 1999

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) is the peak community youth affairs organisation in Queensland representing approximately 400 organisations and individuals across the State. Our aim is to improve the quality of life of young people in Queensland and thereby improve the quality of life of society. We advocate on behalf of young people in Queensland, especially disadvantaged and marginalised young people, to government and the community. We encourage the development of policies and programs responsive to the needs of young people and we promote and support cultural development.

There are various structures in society where 'mainstream' young people and students are able to have a voice, such as school councils, student unions, local government councils and Youth Parliament. **Therefore this submission focuses on how disadvantaged young people need their voices heard by government.**

YANQ believes it is a positive step that the State Government through the Department of Families Youth and Community Care (DFYCC) is committed to Youth Participation. We are pleased to input via this submission as a statewide community youth sector response to the GENERATE - The Youth Participation Charter and Strategy Queensland Government Discussion paper (referred to herein as the document).

Many youth sector programs, networks, organisations and individuals have given direct input to YANQ as the Peak Body in regards to this submission. YANQ would like to acknowledge input into this submission from its membership, particularly Young Parents Program, Deception Bay Community Centre, Women With an Intellectual Learning Disability (WWILD), Youth Advocacy Centre, South East Queensland Youth Accommodation Coalition and Robyn Grant.

YANQ coordinated a consultation meeting on the document for members to input into this submission. YANQ also attended a consultation workshop held by the Office of Youth Affairs (OYA) in August 1999 and gave feedback on the document. As a key stakeholder in the youth sector in Queensland, YANQ was resourced by the OYA to consult with non-English speaking background (NESB) young people, facilitated by the NESB policy officer at YANQ who supports the non English speaking background Youth Issues Network (NYIN). A separate section has been devoted to this target group and for Youth Consultative Network (YCN) at YANQ. YCN has been a section of YANQ since it began in 1997 (*Youth participation and communication, YANQ:1998*). Throughout this time it has gone through periods of being a funded project as well as a voluntary/non-funded project of YANQ. YCN is coordinated by a reference group which consists of seven young people and the YANQ Policy Officer.

The process of resourcing the community youth peak to undertake specific consultation needs to be expanded further as short government timelines are not realistic due to stretched resources within the community youth sector. Resourcing is particularly relevant as YANQ has the expertise the government is seeking on the needs, issues and interests of disadvantaged and marginalised young people. For example YANQ has been involved in Youth Participation processes for many years. Young people are involved in all levels of the organisation such as members of staff and Management Committee, as well as participants in policy development, general membership and activities. A brief history of YANQ's expertise and commitment to Youth Participation is outlined in Appendix 1. **We believe the government could learn from what has worked and what has not worked through our years of experience.**

## **2. DEFINING YOUTH PARTICIPATION**

Youth Participation is a process whereby young people are able to have their needs represented to society through their participation either directly or indirectly. This submission focuses on the fact that many young people have restricted access to information on the social, cultural, economic and political systems within society. Young people may not have the finances, resources, skills or desire to participate in these systems and therefore need support, training and advocacy to address issues of equity regarding participation which are ingrained in our society.

## **3. CONCERN WITH CURRENT GOVERNMENT PRACTICES**

### **3.1 How is government going to ensure disadvantaged and marginalised young people have input to government when they continue to under-resource the community youth sector to enable this to occur?**

YCN facilitated the first Inter-Relay Chats (IRC's) in 1998 for young people to talk directly to Government Ministers via the Internet. This was a new and exciting process which was an outcome of the South East Queensland Youth Advisory Forum coordinated by YANQ, facilitated by YCN and funded by OYA (*Youth Participation and communication*, YANQ:1998). YANQ received no funding for six months post these successful forums and as outlined in the document, future IRC's are recommended to be government run. YCN's ideas and experience have been proposed in the document to be a government run project, not acknowledging the expertise of YCN or supporting YCN to continue this work within the community. Processes such as this by OYA can only demotivate young people in continuing further with youth participation because their ideas and skills are perceived as either 'stolen', dismissed or usurped.

A similar process has also occurred with the register proposed in the document. YCN has a database of approximately 100 young people who want to input into government processes. Why then does the government not resource YANQ to continue these processes which are already established in the community? Why duplicate or re-invent infra-structure?

### **3.2 How will the government ensure that the youth participation is not tokenistic?**

Young people who desperately need their voice heard in government are those who are in receipt of government services for their basic survival needs such as food, clothing, and accommodation. However, the document is not targeted to service the needs of disadvantaged or marginalised young people. Many disadvantaged and marginalised young people do not know whether they will have a roof over their heads each night, do not know where their next meal will come from and have little chance of securing safe, stable and affordable accommodation.

Therefore the young people most in need of this strategy and who do not have the desire, skills, energy or motivation to participate in formal processes are basically forgotten.

Because of this travesty it is difficult to believe that a committee of individuals within a council would not be tokenistic.

Is the Queensland Government trying to 'copy' the federal government or do they just want a Council because most other States have one and they don't?

What mechanisms are in place to embrace work already happening within the community and within YANQ, the peak body in Queensland? What mechanisms will be in place to safeguard ongoing Youth Participation and policy development work in the community.

### **3.3 When will governments begin to acknowledge the expertise in the community sector?**

A growing trend by the Queensland State Government is to appoint individuals onto committees to oversee a political strategy. YANQ has registered concern with this process especially in relation to key reforms in the Youth and Community Sector as individuals are unable to represent the views of disadvantaged or marginalised young people. YANQ recently challenged committee members and government bodies participating in these processes because information was not being exchanged. One committee member stated 'I agree that I am unable to represent the views of the Youth Sector'. There are some government strategies that have convened Taskforces with full membership by peak bodies, such as the Child Protection Taskforce. In our experience these have been successful and are much more effective. Members of these taskforces are representatives and have a role in communication to and information from the taskforce and Council.

Our concern is that the 'State Youth Advisory Council' proposed in the document is mirroring the above process by suggesting individuals sit on a committee and 'possibly' suggesting that the peak body is involved.

#### 4. THE CHARTER

YANQ believes that the Values, Principles and Commitments as outlined in the *Proposed Queensland Government Youth Participation Charter* (GENERATE, page 11/12) are admirable goals for whole of government to strive towards.

##### Concerns

There are only a few concerns regarding the Charter itself that need attention as outlined below, however some of these are wider than the actual Charter and relate to the document or Strategy.

4.1 YANQ believes that the Charter needed to be consulted on and agreed upon before any strategies were proposed. It is difficult for people to respond to strategies in order to implement a charter which has had no prior discussion nor been agreed upon.

4.2 There seems to be a large gap between the Charter and the Strategy for implementation which begs the question to be asked - Is this just rhetoric?

4.3 The document asks how compliance with such a Charter could be achieved. This term 'compliance' suggests conformity or submissiveness, a tone which unfortunately continues throughout the document. There are instances within the document where the word "possibly" such as 'possibly representatives' or 'may' such as 'a mentor program may' has been used especially when discussing support or resources for the community sector. This is different to terminology than that which is used when referring to government processes. There is also the concern that this tone is within the Charter itself such as 'Young people should' which could be seen as paternalistic.

4.4 The cybernetic layout of the Charter within the document may suit people with technical expertise, however this is not a reality for many young people. Young people who could access the document would be articulate and well resourced because the readability, terminology and concepts are very abstract. The document is not written in plain language, is an academic style paper and is non-user friendly for young people and workers working with young people.

4.5 In reality, statements in the Charter such as 'Commitment to ensuring young peoples access to social and economic independence' are questionable. Currently Australia has unjust, discriminatory and punitive federal policies working against young people in our society. Maybe words such as 'working towards' or 'striving for' better represent the reality.

## **5. THE STRATEGY**

YANQ believes that the Strategy needs to build on what is already happening in Youth Participation via the expertise within the community youth sector. Youth Workers are working with young people on a day to day basis within the community. They are involving young people within their organisational processes and feeding their needs, issues and concerns through to the peak body.

The relationships between a Youth Worker and a young person is an essential element enabling young people to participate. Youth Participation is a developmental process which takes time, energy and training by both young people and Youth Workers. Therefore there are major concerns regarding the proposed Strategy, which have not acknowledged that Youth participation is occurring at many levels within the community youth sector.

### **5.1 State Youth Advisory Council 1**

YANQ believes that it would not be fair or just for the government to form a Council that 'would be made up of between 15 and 20 young people' and who are 'individual young people' to be put in a situation where 'All Government Departments would be encouraged to seek the advice of the Youth Advisory Council on policies and programs that effect young people'.

There is an underlying fear that the government knows that it is much easier to respond to a group of individual young people in an unequal power situation than it is to respond to a Peak Body that is informed by hundreds of members.

There is also some confusion as to what model has been proposed because the document also mentions 'possibly' peak bodies and 'consideration' of departmental representation.

## **Concerns**

5.1.1 Young people would be giving their individual opinions which could be very different to the majority. Many of the young people accessing this group would need to be 'politically wise', understand this document and have aspirations to sit on government boards?

5.1.2 Young people will be open to 'Systems' abuse as the power imbalance is obvious.

5.1.3 It would not be safe for many disadvantaged and marginalised young people to participate as an individual because the barriers to full participation are so great. This target group often do not want to participate and therefore will not be represented.

5.1.4 The support needed by young people to have effective participation has been acknowledged in the document when discussing participation by indigenous young people from remote communities and that representative organisations are the key to this support. YANQ believes this support is needed for all young people as well as all disadvantaged and marginalised young people.

5.1.5 What type of information does the government expect to gain from young people that they cannot currently obtain through peak bodies and 'mainstream' formal youth councils/structures at a local level.

## 5.2 Interactive Youth Website

YANQ believes that the Website, *www.generate.qld.gov.au* currently in place is an opportunity for **some** young people to obtain **information** regarding a variety of Youth activities through a user-friendly Website. However YANQ does not believe it is an effective tool for Youth Participation and this may not be possible even within the next decade.

The site presumes a lot about young people's access to a computer. Too many young people do not have access to the Internet for it to be viable as a youth participation strategy. There is a difference between obtaining information and consultation. Many disadvantaged and marginalised young people only share their issues, concerns and needs with trusted workers face to face after a relationship has been built.

Confusion has reigned regarding why people are been asking for feedback regarding a website as an effective participation strategy when it has already been implemented?

## Concerns

5.2.1 The last paragraph of the Website section in the document describes the concerns very well:

'However, access and equity issues would need to be considered for young people in some rural and remote communities, young people not at school and those who may be marginalised or have little community support" (GENERATE, 1999:21)

Therefore YANQ believes that this component of the strategy should not be implemented as a Youth Participation strategy until these concerns are addressed.



5.2.2 The ongoing maintenance of the Website as a two way communication youth participation strategy would require a high level of staff commitment and resources. Would this be beneficial if it is mainly being used only to access information? Are these resources going to effect the level of funding for workers in the community sector?

### **5.3 Register of young people for committees and advisory boards**

YANQ believes this is an unsafe process for disadvantaged and marginalised young people to be involved in and therefore should not be considered as an option/component. All components of a youth participation strategy must have an underlying principle of safety and support for all young people whether they are from disadvantaged target groups or not.

YANQ believes that such a register is unnecessary, raises real concerns regarding confidentiality for individuals and ignores the expertise of youth workers and the role of the peak body.

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### **5.4 Local level consultation**

YANQ believes that existing established infrastructure and mechanisms should be utilised within the community. An example would be to resource YANQ with a Youth Interagency Support Officer to effectively support the 30 Youth Interagency groups throughout Queensland.

Youth Interagencies are valuable mechanisms through which information on needs and issues for young people can be feed to the peak body which is then feed into government. Currently YANQ supports youth interagencies in a networking role. If YANQ was resourced to support local level consultation, processes would be strengthened and provide a solid base for in depth consultation with young people who are not included in formal structures.

There are many projects within the community that need support for either introducing or continuing with youth participation. Brock, et al (1995-6:3-4) highlight the work undertaken by the Youth and community combined Action (YACCA) program in Beenleigh. The article emphasises the importance of support and skill development needed by both workers and young people to achieve youth participation:

*'The YACCA Youth Committee meets once a month and manages all the different projects under our YACCA. It makes overall decisions, including deciding what new projects we should run, inviting guest speakers, interviewing new staff. Lucy is the chairperson of the committee ad she is 15 years old.*

*We need adults to support us, but we as young people know what is needed in our own area.. We have constant contact with other young people, so we know what they want. Without adult supervision,*

*however, we would not really know the right procedures for doing certain things (e.g. talking to the council). Some of the roles that young people take and adults take are:*

- *adults are our helpers and supporters*
- *young people come up with opinions, plans, ideas etc. and we have the final decision*
- *adults don't just tell us how to do it and send us off*
- *adults give their opinions and help us channel our ideas, widen our options and plan ahead; and*
- *when we make decisions as a team, adults help us to discuss the positives and negatives and support our decisions.*

## **6. THE YOUTH CONSULTATIVE NETWORK (YCN)**

The Youth Consultative Network (YCN) is a section of YANQ which involves a reference group of approximately 7 young people and the YANQ Policy and Network Officer. It was formed after the 1997 Youth Advisory Forums to provide a link between young people's groups, individuals and the State Government.

YANQ received funds for two YCN projects during 1998 and has just received some project funds in August 1999, however we have never been successful in obtaining organisational funding to support youth participation seriously. During the past nine months this section of YANQ had been non-funded which has put an immense pressure on YANQ as an organisation supporting and coordinating YCN. Throughout this difficult period YANQ learnt valuable lessons regarding the level of support and resources that are needed to support effective youth participation. This knowledge and experience needs to be taken into consideration within any government Youth Participation model or strategy. These learnings are as follows:

- Youth participation is a developmental process.
- Long term core funds/resources for the planning, development, implementation, maintenance and evaluation are needed.
- Project based funding is important for ongoing motivation and needs to be an extra resource added to the core funds.
- Office space, equipment and communication processes are vital and need to be clearly defined.
- Roles and responsibilities of reference group members need to be defined.
- Being based within the larger statewide peak organisation that has a similar mandate such as linking and advocating to government is essential for mentoring, training, supporting and learning with, and for, young people on the reference group.
- Reference group members to be representative (not individuals) so they are not only supported by YANQ but also have supports within communities to discuss issues with other young people.
- Having fun, social events and food at meetings were all important.
- A Project Officer from YANQ needs to be a member of the reference group to support communication.

- For effective youth participation to occur, a full time Youth Participation Officer is needed to be funded at YANQ. This would not only have supported YCN better but also progressed the work already done by YANQ on youth participation and resourced members throughout the State.

## **7. NON ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Please refer to Appendix 2.

## **8. BARRIERS**

Before outlining an alternative strategy we need to discuss the concept of barriers. YANQ believes that one of the fundamental flaws in the document is the lack of acknowledging or addressing that there are many barriers facing young people to participate, especially disadvantaged and marginalised young people. If this was done in the first place the document may have looked very different.

### **8.1 Barriers to youth participation:**

The following barriers were identified through the research by YANQ Project Officer, James Finn (*Participation's Worth It*, 1998:9-10). These are some of many barriers.

- Pre determined short term outcomes which destroy effective youth participation which requires “consistency and sustained effort”.
- Ignoring the diversity of young people and believing they are not an homogenous group.
- Inadequate process to ensure confidentiality and sensitivity to young people's issues.
- Paternalism stifles participation.
- There are ‘Taboos’ when discussing certain topics.

The following barriers are identified in AYPAC's principles of Youth Participation:

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| • Age                      | • Religion                             |
| • Rural isolation          | • Limited access to information        |
| • Gender and Sexuality     | • Skills to access societal structures |
| • Socioeconomic background | • Youth participation not being valued |
| • Sexuality                | • Lack of youth consultation           |

### **8.2 Barriers to accessing the document:**

- Target group
- Layout and length
- Size of print within the document
- Lack of picture graphics within the document

### 8.3 Anecdotal evidence:

- From young people:
  - “More questions than I do for a school test”
  - “Are we supposed to read this”
  - “The print is too small”
- From Youth Workers:
  - “It takes 30-60 mins to explain the concepts”
  - “ I feel embarrassed to ask a young person to read this”
  - “Young people are not interested”

## 9. *AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY & RECOMMENDATIONS*

To resource the Peak Body for the community youth sector to build on existing mechanisms and processes within the community which support youth participation.

9.1. To supply recurrent funds to YANQ, the peak body for community youth organisations, to implement Youth Participation with:

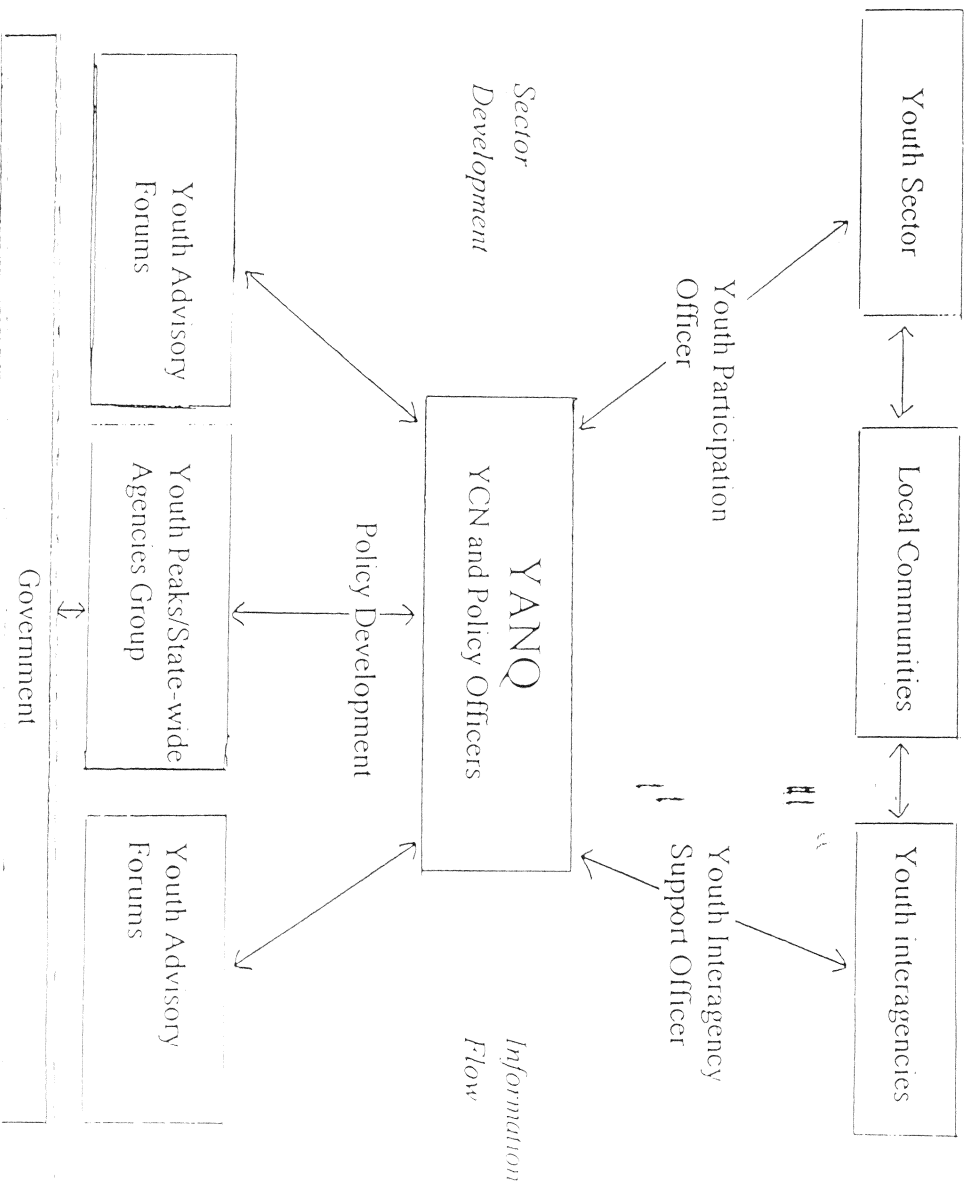
- A full-time Youth Participation Officer at YANQ to coordinate the development of youth participation mechanisms and ongoing policy development in the community.
- A full-time Youth Interagency Support Officer at YANQ to assist approximately 30 Youth Interagency groups which already exist within local communities to incorporate Youth Participation within their many and varied structures.
- Developmental and maintenance funds for YANQ to support YCN as an ongoing Youth Consultative mechanism for young people.

9.2. To continue Youth Advisory Forums:

- Extend the resources to ensure more forums occur which are coordinated by the community.
- Resource community groups such as peak bodies and Statewide agencies to support the process of youth participation to enable young people to facilitate the forums for young people.

9.3. To resource Youth workers with training in Youth participation models and processes.

- For the Department to release funds for Community groups to access to either attend or coordinate Inservice training for staff, management committees, and young people in youth participation eg. Youth participation mechanisms such as young people on management Committees.



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# Appendix 1.

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF YANO'S YOUTH PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES 1995-1999**

<b>1995-96</b>	Special Double Edition of <i>transitions</i> Journal dedicated to Youth Participation. ( <i>transitions</i> ,vol 5, nos 2&3,YANO:1996)
<b>1996</b>	Formation of YANO's Youth participation Working party.
<b>1996 (Sept)</b>	YANO's Youth Participation 1 Review (Callaghan,A. & Grainger,S.,YANO:1996)
<b>1996 (Dec)</b>	Young People's Participation Working Party Discussion Paper (Warren,S.,YANO:1996)
<b>1996</b>	YANO participated in AYPAC's Youth Gathering (AYPAC:1996)
<b>1997</b>	Formation of the Youth Consultative Network(YCN) at YANO
<b>1997 (Sept)</b>	Young People in Management workshop (YANO:1997)
<b>1997 (Nov)</b>	Proposal forwarded to DFYCC for the ongoing maintenance and development of YCN (Re-submitted in 1999, however still only spasmodic project funds secured)
<b>1998 (July)</b>	YANO coordinated and supported the South East QLD Youth Advisory Forums by YCN for young people by young people
<b>1998</b>	YANO coordinated a NESB Youth Participation Project (Damali,A.,YANO:1998)
<b>1998</b>	YANO coordinated the ' <i>Participation's Worth It</i> ' project to assist in the development and documentation of good practice in supporting young people's participation. (Finn,J.,YANO:1998)
<b>1998</b>	YANO voted to accept AYPAC's Youth Participation Policy.(AYPAC:1998)
<b>1998</b>	YANO become signatories to AYPAC's ' <i>Declaration for an Inclusive</i>

*Society'* to ensure young people be directly included in democratic processes. (Croce, C., AYPAC:1998)

<b>1998</b>	YANQ supported YCN to attend 5 <sup>th</sup> State Youth Affairs Conference.
<b>1998</b>	Young people as members of YANQ's Management Committee.
<b>1998 (Dec)</b>	YANQ coordinated a YCN Vision day workshop
<b>1999 (May)</b>	YANQ conducted a YCN review workshop
<b>1999 (Sept)</b>	YANQ conducted a YCN review meeting





**youth affairs network qld**

## **APPENDIX 2**

# **NESB YOUTH ISSUES NETWORK RESPONSE TO THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATION REGARDING THE PROPOSED YOUTH PARTICIPATION CHARTER & STRATEGY**

*Prepared by John Bamborough ~ NESB Policy & Network Officer, Youth  
Affairs Network of Queensland ~ September 1999*

# **NESB YOUTH ISSUES NETWORK RESPONSE TO THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED YOUTH PARTICIPATION CHARTER & STRATEGY 15/9/99**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The NESB Youth Issues Network (NESBYIN) welcomes the opportunity to input into the Queensland Government's proposed Youth Participation Charter and Strategy as detailed in the *Generate* discussion paper. However, the extent to which a comprehensive consultation with NESB young people can occur has been limited by the very short time available to do so. Additionally, it must also be recognised that NESB young people are not a homogenous group. Indeed, in Queensland alone there are approximately 80, 000 NESB young people from 160 ethnic communities. It is estimated that 55, 000 of these speak a language other than English at home. This represents a significant population of young people in this state. The time given to undertake this consultation would in no way allow NESBYIN to connect with anywhere near the full range of young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. NESBYIN believes this to be an inherent flaw in the process and one, which does not do justice to genuine consultation.

NESBYIN is of the view that consultation processes, especially with NESB young people, should be developmental. It must be noted for example, that for some NESB young people, there exists a degree of unfamiliarity regarding government systems, concepts and terminology in the Australian context, all of which are evident throughout *Generate*. Therefore, it often takes time and relationship building to be able to walk alongside some NESB young people and develop with them, a sufficient understanding of the ideas and concepts like those entrenched within *Generate* in order to solicit an informed response. NESBYIN believes that the limitations around this consultation process have presented real barriers to this occurring.

## **ABOUT NESBYIN**

NESBYIN is a statewide issues based Network comprising of 135 individual and organisational members derived from the youth sector, ethnic sector, and those generally concerned with NESB youth issues. NESBYIN was first established in 1991 in response to increasing concerns relating to the lack of government and non-government responses to the issues that affect the lives of NESB young people. At that time, NESBYIN developed a strong relationship with the community youth sector peak body, the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANO), in order to encourage a peak body response to identified issues of concern. The result of this ongoing relationship has been the continued employment of a NESB Policy Officer at YANO during the past 5-year period. This position is now recognised as a core part of YANO. NESBYIN members continue to support the NESB Policy Officer at YANO through active participation in policy development processes, participation in working parties and involvement in various consultation processes.

## **NESBYIN'S CONSULTATION PROCESS**

The resources supplied to YANO from the Office of Youth Affairs enabled the NESB Policy Officer to undertake consultations with NESB young people regarding the proposed Youth Participation Charter and Strategy were utilised in the following way:

- The funds enabled 4 NESB young people (2 young women and 2 young men) to be contracted by YANO to undertake consultations with their peers.

- The NESB Policy Officer and 2 youth workers connected to the 4 young people met on 2 occasions to dialogue around the ideas and concepts presented through *Generate* and to brainstorm appropriate consultation processes with their peers.
- 2 of the young people felt that they did not need support from the NESB Policy Officer at their consultation session and preferred to undertake this independently. The other 2 young people required support and the presence of the NESB Policy Officer and youth worker at their consultation.
- The NESB Policy Officer also met with 1 other group of NESB young people independently of the 4 young people contracted to undertake peer consultations.

It must be noted that all of the young people had difficulty reading the *Generate* document because of the format, colour coordination, font size and the lengthy nature of the discussion paper. Additionally, it is estimated that 95% of the young people had difficulty understanding the ideas and concepts presented through *Generate*. It is acknowledged that the level of difficulty experienced ranged from ‘*not that hard*’ to ‘*fairly extreme difficulty*’. None of the young people had any desire whatsoever to complete the questionnaire provided at the back of the *Generate* document. They felt that this was an inappropriate way to gather feedback and ideas from young people, that there were far too many questions, and consequently much preferred to open up dialogue in order to give feedback and ideas.

## CONSULTATIONS

1

### Consultation One

The NESB Policy Officer has over time, developed relationships with a group of 20 young people from the Horn of Africa who meet every Sunday to play soccer informally at Yeronga State High School. 12 of the young people are originally from Eritrea and the remaining 8 from Ethiopia. All of the young people are young men. Their respective ages range from 14 to 25 years. The postcodes of the areas in which they live are as follows:

- 7 of the young people = 4104.
- 3 of the young people = 4103.
- 2 of the young people = 4102.
- 8 of the young people = 4151.

Discussion took place regarding the 4 proposed ideas detailed in *Generate* relating to participation strategies. Responses to each were as follows:

### Internet website:

- None of the young people have computers at home so access to the website is difficult.
- When asked if they would access the website through the use of computers at libraries or Internet cafes only 3 said that this would be something they may consider. The young people talked about the ‘hassles’ involved in accessing computers at such places. Difficulties cited included the money it costs to use such computers and the booking systems that are often in place. Most agreed that these factors presented sufficient barriers that would prevent them from accessing the website.
- All did agree that the website is a good idea for those who have computers in their homes.
- All of them agreed that information in a range of community languages on the website is positive.

### Young people’s register:

- This idea raised suspicion within the group. This is understandable given that many have refugee backgrounds and have experienced violent and oppressive government regimes in their former countries of origin.
- The young people discussed the rate at which they move from one place to another as presenting difficulties in how up to date such a register would be.
- None of the young people would want their names included in such a register.

#### **Youth Advisory Council:**

- All of the young people had difficulty understanding how such a mechanism might give them a voice in government.
- Questions were raised regarding the selection process and assumptions made about the type of young person likely to be chosen.
- The young people felt that such a mechanism would not last long because young people would get bored with the process to quickly and especially in light of their view that nothing much changes anyway and there are very seldom tangible outcomes that can be seen.

#### **Local level consultation:**

- The young people liked the idea of “*people like me coming out to see them to talk about problems and ideas*”.
- It is estimated that at least half of the young people are connected to a youth worker or community service provider. Those who are suggested that they could give them their ideas and information regarding issues so they could feed it into government, but again, the issue of them experiencing a lack of outcomes and change in the past was raised. They also stated that information could be given to them through services they may be accessing.
- It was stated that they felt young people do not like sitting around tables in offices talking all the time about problems and issues, and would prefer to see interaction and dialogue occur through structured activities.
- Local level consultation was met a lot more positively than any of the other ideas because the young people recognised that this mechanism presented far more opportunities for them to participate than any of the others.

None of the young people could see any benefit in the Youth Participation Charter and felt that it would only serve to assist politicians to continue to think that they know “*how it is for young people when they really don't*”

Additional issues and concerns raised by this group of young people includes the following:

- Genuine NESB youth participation strategy rather than assuming a blanket strategy will work for every young person.
- Employment and training opportunities.
- Enhanced English as a Second Language Program in state schools that will better assist NESB young people to gain a good education.
- Safe, secure and affordable housing options for young people.

#### **Consultation Two**

The information from Consultation Two represents feedback from the 2 young people who consulted with their peers independently. Feedback is as follows:

- 15 young people were consulted.
- 6 of the young people were originally from Bosnia. 2 of these were young women and 4 young men.
- 6 of the young people were originally from Sudan. All of these were young men.

- 2 of the young people are from second generation Spanish speaking communities. Both of these were young women.
- 1 of the young people was originally from Iraq. This person is a young man.

All of the young people consulted live in areas with postcodes: 4104, 4103 & 4300. The age range of the young people consulted was 16 to 20 years.

None of the young people consulted were interested or concerned with the Youth Participation Charter so declined to comment. Feedback regarding the 4 proposed Youth Participation Strategies is as follows:

#### **Internet website:**

- None of the young people consulted have a computer at home.
- The young people consulted suggested that information should be disseminated through their schools, through television and media advertising, at cinemas, and at other places and venues that young people are likely to access.

#### **Young people's register:**

- The young people consulted would prefer to be involved in a range of structured activities and be resourced to participate in other aspects of community life and through these mechanisms, be available to be consulted. Ideas such as youth spaces where young people can meet one another and hang-out, night-life options for young people under 18 years of age, and supported accommodation/housing options represent the ideas for structured activities given by the young people.
- The young people stated that the idea of a register is positive if it is to be used to disseminate information, but not so good for the purpose of contacting people to be involved in committee's and/or advisory boards. They did not view these as relevant ways for young people to be involved and as suggested above, would prefer to participate through other mechanisms.

#### **Youth Advisory Council:**

- All of the young people consulted stated that the Youth Advisory Council should be comprised of youth sector organisations and government departments rather than young people because they feel that this is not the way their peers want to participate.
- Again, the issue of a lack of action and outcomes that directly benefit young people was raised as a major concern regarding groups that feed into government decision-making processes.
- It was also stated that young people need to be educated about government before they can be reasonably expected to participate in it.

#### **Local level consultation:**

- This mechanism was viewed as very positive because the young people could see how this participation pathway could be related to activities they may access through service providers with whom they have developed relationships and are therefore comfortable to discuss issues of concern with.
- The young people also stated that local level consultation could be a way to develop opportunities for young people to be employed to consult with their peers. Again, this point was raised in the context of the young people feeling comfortable to discuss issues with a person they have developed a relationship with.

Other issues raised by these young people include the following:

- No trust in government at all.
- The need for youth spaces.
- The need to prevent young people from being homeless.
- The need to get young people involved in government programs.
- The need to give young people employment opportunities.
- The need to support young people with drug and alcohol issues rather than sending them to prison because it is not their fault.
- The need to ensure that young people are not hassled and discriminated against by police officers.
- A participation strategy targeted towards NESB young people in recognition that they are often more disadvantaged than their counterparts.

### Consultation Three

The third consultation involved the 2 young people who required support and the presence of the NESB Policy Officer and a youth worker at their consultation session with peers. Feedback is as follows:

- 8 young people participated in this consultation session.
- 3 of the young people were young men from the Horn of Africa with 4151 postcodes. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20 years.
- The other 5 young people were young women whose ages ranged from 17 to 19 years. 3 of the young women were born in the Former Yugoslavia and the remaining 2 young women from the Horn of Africa. All of the young women have a 4102 postcode.

Again, none of the young people were concerned about the Youth Participation Charter because they felt it had no relevance to them whatsoever. Their feedback regarding the Youth Participation Strategies is as follows:

### Internet website:

- None of these young people have a computer at home, therefore they view access as difficult.
- Access to the Internet via libraries and community centre's was raised, however, the young people pointed out that accessing the Internet through such places means they would have very limited time to do so. Cost and transport was also raised as an issue.
- The young people suggested additional mechanisms through which information can be disseminated. These included television and media advertising/campaigns, information at train stations, bus stops and Centlink. The idea of a young people's magazine that could be in all newsgagents and other venues was discussed as one mechanism to disseminate information on services, rights, activities, and consultations.

### Register:

- This proposed strategy was met with suspicion because of a lack of trust in government.
- The young people also raised concerns about how the government would keep such a register updated given they move home fairly often.

### Youth Advisory Council:

- The idea of a Youth Advisory Council was met with some skepticism among the young people. They raised concerns regarding the 'types' of meetings these would be. Again, they were more inclined to see genuine participation occur through developmental processes such as relationship building with groups of young people through the provision of activities. It was also suggested that the government should employ young people to talk to other young people regarding their input into decision-making processes.

- The young people questioned whether such a Council would facilitate clear and expedient outcomes that would directly benefit young people such as them.
- The young people also liked the kind of process the NESB Policy Officer and accompanying youth worker were facilitating regarding these consultations. They are also familiar with YANQ and NESBYIN and are comfortable regarding the work we do as long as we keep talking to them and can demonstrate clear outcomes.

#### Local level consultation:

- If local level consultations mean processes such as the one they are engaged in through the YANQ consultation, then they see this as positive.
- Young people should be employed by government to talk to other young people locally.
- Youth workers working in local communities should be involved in local level consultations because they have relationships with young people.
- The young people also discussed the potential to input through local members of parliament, but again, felt that there is insufficient information and knowledge on how to do this.

Other issues raised by this group of young people includes:

- Concerns regarding the extent to which real estate agents discriminate against young people, especially those from a NESB.
- The need for youth spaces and activities for young people.
- The need for increased employment opportunities. †
- The need for safe, secure and affordable housing options.
- The need for the broader community to stop stereotyping young people.

To end, the young people wanted these quotes included in this report. They were assured that they would be:

*“why do young people get less money than everybody else through Centrelink and work when it costs us the same to live as every other person who is older than us”*

*“politicians suck, they think they know what its like for young people, but they are not in touch with our reality, we need things done now and quickly”*

*The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland and NESBYIN would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the many young people who took the time to participate in this consultation process, even though for many, it was a struggle to do so because as they kept reiterating to us.... ‘nothing ever changes anyway so why bother’.*