

Submission Response

From

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ)

On the

*Australians Working Together – Helping people
move forward*

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We believe that everybody is entitled to have their basic emotional and material rights met. The central role of governments is to ensure that this occurs.

Unfortunately, at the moment, governments in Australia focus on supporting global economic interests. Whilst we believe that everyone is fundamentally equal, some sections of our society do not have access to their fair share of society's resources. This includes young people, whose basic human rights are currently not being met. YANQ is committed to encouraging positive discrimination on behalf of those groups, which *miss out* in society so that this type of social injustice will be overcome. It is only when everyone's fundamental rights are fulfilled, and each has the means to fully participate, that it will become relevant to talk about "mutual obligation" between society and its members.

“YANQ Values”

ABOUT THE YOUTH AFFAIRS NETWORK OF QUEENSLAND

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) Inc. is the peak community youth affairs organization in Queensland. Representing approximately 400 individuals and organizations from Queensland's youth sector, we promote the interests and well being of young people across the state. YANQ advocates for and with young people, especially disadvantaged young people, to government and the community. Further, YANQ encourages and participates in the development of policies, programs, projects and research that are responsive to the needs of young people.

INTRODUCTION

YANQ welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Australians Working Together – Helping people move forward.

Over the years YANQ has undertaken considerable work in the area of social and economic participation for young people including responding to issues of youth homelessness, alternative education, youth wages, income support and unemployment. More recently we have been active in responding to the implementation and evaluation of Youth Allowance, activity testing, breaches, issues for parenting young women and junior rates of pay. YANQ is currently represented on the Federal Government's Activity Test Evaluation Community Reference Group, Centrelink Peak Group, Youth Protocols Group and Centrelink Multicultural Advisory Committee.

YANQ holds a strong view that successive governments in Australia have failed to address the unemployment, education, training and income support problems in particularly amongst young people. The effects of globalisation of our economy have hit the young and vulnerable the most. Young unemployed do not need any more training programs, which cannot provide a job placement at the end. Young unemployed do not need to have more job seeking techniques without more jobs being available. What young people do need is support and encouragement so they can move towards finding their rightful place in society.

Young people need not to be used as political tools, shouldering more blame for lack of participation in community life. The issue of unemployment amongst Australian young people requires a long-term strategy, which crosses party politic lines. YANQ believes that major political parties need to firstly acknowledge their failings in responding to youth unemployment so far, and secondly, develop a bi-partisan approach, which encompasses the views of young people themselves in developing an action strategy with commitment to sustained resourcing.

YANQ believes that unemployment is a key issue, which underpins the various problems and difficulties canvassed in the Australians Working Together document. YANQ believes that the Government must take responsibility for ensuring that Australian citizens do move forward together and in an equitable way.

The widening of the gap between the rich and poor in Australia is clearly unacceptable. Even more unacceptable is the views and attitudes of the bourgeois and the political elite that protects them. No more blame should be put on a voiceless minority struggling to live day-by-day and therefore incapable of protecting itself.

If after major investment and a genuine focus on creating job opportunities for young people, we still have unemployment amongst our young people, the Government must meet its moral responsibility to ensure that no young person has to live in poverty as a result of not having a job.

YANQ's view is informed in light of Australia's commitment to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. YANQ view has also been informed by undertaking consultation with state membership. YANQ's view is in line with the organisations Policy Platform and the Values, which underpins the work of the organization. These include:

***"Each human being is entitled to have their fundamental rights fulfilled.
At the very least, everyone is absolutely entitled:***

- *to be heard and listened to,*
- *to have the necessary information to make informed life decisions,*
- *to be involved in decision making affecting their life,*
- *to food, shelter and clothing,*
- *to access free health care and education,*
- *to associate freely with people of their choice,*
- *to live free of categorisation or labelling,*
- *to equal remuneration for equal work, and,*
- *to sufficient financial support to ensure they do not live in poverty.*

If, as a society, we fail to meet the basic rights and needs of our members, this can be expected to create individual fear and social instability. Society has exactly the same responsibilities to young people as to adults or any other group.

We recognise the mutual obligation between society and its members. Mutual obligation occurs when rights and responsibilities are equally balanced. Accordingly, it is only when someone's basic human rights are fulfilled that they can be expected to take full social responsibility.

Governments are responsible for ensuring that the rights of all members of society are met. They should ensure that all people, irrespective of background, can share in a safe and sustainable environment. Governments should ensure fair and just structures are developed for all people to enjoy, irrespective of background. A key goal of society should be to work toward strengthening its ability to provide outcomes of equal value for all its members.

Human beings are fundamentally equal, however some sections of our society have never had the same level of access to social resources. Amongst these we particularly recognise that young women are an oppressed group, due to the patriarchal construct of Western society, and that all young people are oppressed by the very society that has socially constructed their membership of this category. In order to mend this imbalance, particular attention must be given to these groups by the State and other sections of our society. YANQ believes that the primary role of governments is to provide support and services that address shortfalls in the needs and rights of their citizens.

YANQ is committed to positive discrimination on behalf of oppressed groups in society. Affirmative action is necessary for groups that are socially and culturally disadvantaged, to enable them to access the additional opportunities required to catch up with those who are more fortunate. We believe we have an obligation to prioritise resourcing those people who are not structurally supported within this society."

YOUTH AFFAIRS NETWORK OF QUEENSLAND YOUTH POLICY PLATFORM

In 2000 YANQ released the second edition of organisation's Youth Policy Platform. The document contains a number of policy positions, which have relevance and present some framework for our response to this document. These Policy positions form YANQ's lobbying base on a range of issues, a number of which are relevant to this response. They are as follows:

"Training pathways

In developing training options, pathways between education, training, and employment should be clearly articulated so that young people are not engaged in training as a method of reducing youth unemployment figures. Training opportunities should respond to industry need and young people's articulated choice. While YANQ encourages youth services and young people to become more involved in the development of training plans through their own volition, YANQ also believes that it is incumbent on government to include the range of stakeholders in consultations about training plans. YANQ believes that safety nets should exist to provide pathways for all young people between education, training and employment. Therefore young people who are denied income support and who are not in education should not miss out on training opportunities.

YANQ is committed to:

- ❖ *Supporting access and equity strategies to monitor and ensure the most disadvantaged groups have access to training and ultimately employment options.*
- ❖ *Advocating for principles and guidelines for training provider organisations, including minimum standards, which must become part of funding guidelines to ensure young people receive adequate support and training services e.g. cross-cultural issues.*
- ❖ *Encouraging the building of relationships between training providers and youth services in order to foster better communication and understanding of young people's issues.*

Education

YANQ believes that young people have a fundamental right to free education. Education needs to be delivered in a way, which recognizes the cultural diversity of young people. Curriculum must recognize the true history of Indigenous Australians and the development of knowledge from a range of cultures. Young people must be seen as active participants in making decisions relating to the delivery of education. Young people must be given clear information about processes of suspension, exclusion, and cancellation of enrollment and what behaviors lead to these outcomes. All decisions must be subject to appeal options and a fair, independent appeal process must exist. Government departments need to have better coordination and greater consistency of policies affecting young people e.g. young people who are independent not being asked for parental/guardian permission. YANQ believes that schools must consider themselves as sites of learning that do not only prepare young people for the labour force. Alternative education options must be available to all young people as an informed choice and not be limited as a behaviour management strategy. Participation, respect, relevant curricula, flexibility, access to information and appeals processes are key area that need to be addressed in order to meet the educational needs of disadvantaged and marginalised young people.

YANQ is committed to:

- ❖ *Supporting models of partnership between school and community based agencies.*
- ❖ *The development and implementation of innovative and creative alternative education models that are responsive to the education needs of disadvantaged and marginalised young people.*

- ❖ *Issues such as racism, sexism and homophobia being addressed within the education system.*
- ❖ *School based programs being enhanced to meet the needs of a culturally diverse society e.g. ESL.*

Youth participation

YANQ recognises that young people are not viewed as full citizens in our society and as such, encounter multiple barriers that prevent them from fully participating in all aspects of community life. Youth participation is a process whereby young people are able to have their needs represented to society through having a voice either directly or indirectly. Youth participation is a founding element in any youth agency. It ensures the representation of young people and provides the information needed to implement youth directed strategies in order to fulfil the needs of young people. Youth participation models must reflect diverse populations and participation methods (not just be targeted at committees and formal meetings). They should be a reflection of what young people want as opposed to a model being imposed on them. It is also worthy to note that tokenistic participation is just as bad if not worse than no youth participation. Young people should not be left to operate in isolation of other young people or their supporting organisation\community. Participation is about power; therefore power must be shared more equitably in our society.

YANQ is committed to:

- ❖ *Supportive and developmental processes that enable young people to participate.*
- ❖ *Developing mechanisms that ensure opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making that effects their lives.*
- ❖ *Ensuring that young people have the opportunity to learn the skills required for effective participation. Given the time and appropriate training young people can and do participate effectively at many levels.*
- ❖ *Supporting youth workers within the youth sector to advocate on behalf of young people, as we should not assume that all young people would want to participate in matters affecting their lives."*

Questionnaire

The following responses have been informed by consultation with YANQ members:

Being active in the economic and social life of Australia

YANQ believes that **human beings are essentially social beings**. Everyone has a place in the community, and should have the means to connect with significant others. The behaviour of individuals is affected by their background and experience, therefore is important that people's history be acknowledged. If each person is accepted at face value, and others focus on building relationships designed to understand them, then the true collective nature of human kind can come to the fore.

In recent history, young peoples rights in Australia have been compromised to a point where, a young person has to justify why they should be entitled to any assistant from the Government, even when they are living in poverty.

Young people who are living in poverty and facing multiple disadvantages such as homelessness and systematic abuse cannot be expected to be an active participant in mainstream social or economic structures.

YANQ believes that the Government must ensure that no young person lives in poverty. This can be achieved by simply separating the current youth allowance concept into two functions. Firstly as a mater of rights, every young unemployed Australian must be provided with a basic living payment. This payment must be above the poverty line to ensure a young person has access to food shelter, health care and other basic human rights.

Secondly the government must ensure adequate and appropriate education and training opportunities are made available to young people. The government must also provide young people with additional financial assistance to ensure their access and participation in the economic and social life of Australia.

YANQ does not support or accept the growing casualisation of the workforce and demands that the Government ensure young people are not exploited by undertaking part-time work.

1. How can we best encourage people who have specific needs such as indigenous people, mature age workers, parents or people with disabilities to be active in the community?

On page two of the "Australians Working Together" document it is stated that:

"We will take account of the diverse needs and circumstances of all individuals, ranging from those who are able to look for work with little additional assistance, to those who face severe or multiple obstacles to employment and are not expected to be ready to work for some time."

YANQ supports the above notion and encourages the government to allocate public resources in an equitable way. The Government can encourage people to be active in community by engaging them in addressing the specific issues, which have contributed to their disadvantages and marginalisation.

YANQ is concerned that young people are not named, in the question, as a group with specific needs. YANQ would like the Government to ensure that if there are any implications in resource allocation that young people will be recognised for their specific needs.

YANQ believes that if youth issues are to be addressed as part of the Pathways process, a clear link needs to be established between the Pathways process and the broader welfare reform.

2. What should we do in rural and remote areas, or other areas, where opportunities to undertake activities may be limited?

YANQ believes that shortages of employment, education and training as well as community activities must be addressed. The Government must recognise that it is not in the best interest of these communities to have profiteering companies put in charge of assisting them in addressing their social issues.

YANQ is of the view that although there are similarities between rural and remote areas across Australia, that particular attention must also be given to the specific needs of each community.

3. How can we make sure activities are:

- meaningful and of benefit to the individual;
- available; and
- appropriately supported?

YANQ believes that a number of issues need to be addressed in order to achieve the above outcome. These include ensuring that:

- that activities which are provided lead to real jobs
- financial support is available for young people to undertake studies of their choice
- community organisations are adequately funded to coordinate ongoing community activities
- equality and equity is considered -especially for marginalised and disadvantaged young people
- support provided to young people includes transport, clothes, food, etc.

- young people have voluntary choice, a wider and more meaningful choice and are better resourced

As an example, the JPET program needs to be better defined and resourced, have the short-term expectation for particular outcomes relaxed and allow for long-term assistance of disadvantaged young people, which the program targets.

The role of Centrelink

YANQ believes that the primary role of centrelink in regards to young people is to ensure that **all** young people across Australia have their basic human rights (as described earlier in this document) met. Centrelink must provide a basic living payment, a no hassle living allowance that young people could access.

The Centrelink can also assist the Government in meeting its other obligations to young people by ensuring that training and employment opportunities are provided to all young people in an equitable manner. The training must be undertaken by choice and lead to real employment opportunities.

1. What type of training and support might be required for Centrelink staff?

The type of training may include:

- how to link and build relationships with local people-service providers, advocates, and service provision organisations
- training in regards to specific need groups (marginalised, disadvantaged, homeless, exiting detention, NESB etc

Centrelink can tap into a great wealth of knowledge by resourcing the community sector to enable training in their areas of expertise.

More youth service units could enhance young peoples access and dedicated youth & student teams could give broad based support, which is tailored to the needs of individual young people.

2. How can Centrelink cater for the needs of the new groups of people undertaking activity requirements for the first time?

- How could Centrelink help these people to adapt to the new arrangements?

By increasing support for community organisations, which can respond on an ongoing basis and at a local level. Centrelink can also increase the level of training and resourcing of staff. Provision of effective Call Centres can also be of assistance. However, the call centres need to be reviewed on regular basis to ensure they do not become barriers to participation.

3. How could Centrelink make the best use of interviews to give people relevant information and encouragement?

By increasing the level of training and resourcing to ensure relevant help and supportive staff.

Conducting interviews, which are meaningful to the individual – not an impersonal formality that must be gone through before the next interview.

4. How can we improve the many existing connections between Centrelink, service providers and community organisations?

Centrelink can supply training eg. Training around Youth Protocols to the community sector. This has been identified as a high need within the youth sector. Building relationships between services organisations and Centrelink.

Activities such as open days, or agency visits can also enhance the connections amongst service providers, community organisations and centrelink.

5. If Centrelink refers people to a service or community organisation, how can we avoid asking people to provide the same information again and again?

Develop referral case notes and Service profiles that follow confidential guidelines.

Develop effective levels of interaction with community organisations regarding clients and develop a two-way information and referral protocol.

There is a need for an advocacy protocols for client communication, which enables Centrelink to know the type of information the community sector could never provide it with.

Recognition of the right of those who have self excluded from mainstream society.

Working with businesses and communities

YANQ believes that welfare of the community is Governments responsibility.

YANQ also believes that the Government must find ways to ensure that the top percentage of 'rich' people of this country as well as the overseas companies who are active in Australia pay their fare share of tax. More effort needs to be directed towards making big business pay proper tax as suppose to the current focus on catching some one who is living in poverty and receives \$20 extra on welfare payments.

1. How can we encourage businesses to generate more opportunities for people with disabilities, indigenous people, mature age workers and parents returning to work?

Opportunities need to be expanded to ensure people have access to work experience and/ or paid jobs. The Government needs to ensure that expanding opportunities for one group does not happen at the exclusion of other groups.

YANQ believes that the Government must provide financial incentives for the business to incorporate more trainee/ apprentice ship opportunities for young people. The focus of this strategy must remain on assisting small, local businesses, which in partnership with local community organisations can provide a local response to support young people.

YANQ strongly believes that young people should have a choice of training opportunities and the training must be both realistic and meaningful to young people.

2. How can we encourage communities to generate more opportunities for these people?

The Government needs to look at what people want to do rather than try to fit them in an existing non-relevant training. To generate more opportunities, Centrelink needs to include a job training partnership with community organisations. The Government needs to ensure proper resourcing and monitoring of this program to ensure the best outcome for young people.

Development of business incubators in rural and regional communities has proven to be an effective strategy. Government needs to expand this strategy and bring together youth training issues and the economic development of specific regions.

3. How can businesses and local communities work together to generate more opportunities for these people?

Centrelink needs to develop partnership in local areas and acknowledge that there are meaningful opportunities in local areas that can be supported to ensure further training and employment outcomes for young people.

Tax incentives for local and small business in order for opportunities to be made available to young people. On the job training paid by Government will also increase the capacity of business sector to work with local communities.

Community and voluntary work

In a recent speech at the State Volunteering Conference M.Zgryza, NESB policy Officer at YANQ mentioned that:

Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place in not-for-profit or organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- To be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- Of the volunteers own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial payment;
- In designated volunteer positions only.

The definition specifically excludes; work undertaken as a result of community service orders; work-for-benefit schemes which do not allow the individual to choose to volunteer; and, student work experience. The reasoning is that these activities are not entirely of the person's free will, but are done in order to 'fulfil an obligation'.

"This would be my view of volunteering and probably the view of many others, However, we need to challenge the concept that voluntary work must be linked to an external purpose such as seeing voluntary work as a stepping stone to employment, seeing it as part of the social contact and as an obligation to give back. We need to keep the focus on what can the participant gain from the volunteer experience in the first instance (for their specific need), and then what can society gain only as a secondary outcome."
(M.Zgryza)

1. How can we ensure that organisations providing community work opportunities are able to meet the needs of people on income support?

Organisations interested in providing volunteering opportunities need to have Policy and procedure and clear values in place before taking people on board. Government needs to provide adequate resourcing for community sector to make this a reality.

Monitor of bona fides to ensure young peoples rights are not getting lost in the system. Further monitoring of for-profit organisations is necessary in order to stop the rotting of the system by profiteering business operators. This includes unethical practices of new companies set up to exploit free labour.

Ensure that job network providers – provide services to all people- especially to marginalised and disadvantaged young people whom many job network providers currently don't want because of difficulty in job placement.

Government to focus on providing funding to community based, non-profit organisations to undertake local job network services.

2. How can we make sure that both voluntary organisations and people on income support get the best out of community work placements?

Providing a comprehensive training component as part of work for the dole (meaningful practice leading to further jobs). This training has to be meaningful to the participant and relevant to the choices of individuals.

Opportunities must clearly lead to a job or further training for the participants (see a number of comments above).

3. What type of community and voluntary work would be suitable for meeting activity requirements?

The government must recognise that many people are already volunteering and acknowledge this as suitable activities.

Government should provide greater discretion to bodies such as Centrelink to make an approval of volunteering opportunities.

Reasonable requirements

In the report from Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce 2001 (footprints to the future) a number of observations have been made. They include:

"The Taskforce was concerned to hear that some young people in need are not accessing Youth Allowance.

Some existing structures are not suitable for these young people and in rural and regional centres there are a few alternative-learning environments. Marginalised young people indicated that, in some circumstances, they had turned to petty theft or drug dealing to survive.

Concerns expressed were about activity testing and how quickly a breach could be issued. A particular focus was an apparently rigid application of activity testing provisions, particular upon young people experiencing difficult personal circumstances, for example as a result of family breakdown, sexual abuse, or mental health problems.

In some cases, young people were discouraged from accessing income support as a result. Inability to access income support makes engagement with study or other activities impossible, and further marginalises an already disadvantaged group of young people."

1. How can we ensure that groups with specific needs, such as indigenous people, young people and homeless people, receive and understand the requirements that go with their payments?
 - How should we let these people know of these requirements?
 - How often should we contact these people

YANQ believes that Centrelink needs to make the requirements simple and communicate this in a simple way so a diverse group of people could understand them. Centrelink needs to be sensitive to cultural differences and act in a manner, which is culturally appropriate.

Centrelink needs to place young people's need first. This can be achieved through intensive one-to-one support opportunities such as the Personal Support Program.

Centrelink must take to account real life circumstances of disadvantaged young people. Centrelink cannot assume communication by mail is always possible, as many young people are homeless or live in a transient way. Centrelink must allow young peoples advocates as contacts and have more flexibility to ensure communication is maintained on an ongoing basis.

Centrelink needs to encourage people to share their specific needs, build trust and develop referral processes. Centrelink needs to respect a young persons right to choose how and when if they want to participate. Many young people find the dealing with the Government agencies so hard that they choose not to participate. It is due to the same reason that young people and the people who work with them also are hesitant to use official appeal processes.

2. How can we best help people to meet these requirements?

By providing meaningful-one-on-one support to young people. The support provided needs to be personal so a young persons specific needs could be addressed. Targeting of people who might need assistance is also of vital importance.

Centrelink should not make assumptions about peoples' ability to understand. At every stage Centrelink must ensure that young people have clearly understood any requirement.

Centrelink must acknowledge that it costs money to go to all Centrelink meetings and provide a subsidy for this purpose.

Centrelink must develop flexibility in order to address people's needs.

Centrelink should tell people about organisations like Welfare Rights who will advocate for them if there is a problem- explain the appeal processes to them at the beginning.

Consistently applied protocols and processes as well as further education awareness programs are needed.

Centrelink must recognise the role of community sector and provide resources for ongoing assistance by community groups.

Personal Support Programme

The main objective of Personal Support programme must be to address personal barriers identified by young people themselves. Government must take responsibility for addressing the various social obstacles that prevent young people from social and community participation.

Allocation of resources to address long-term issues faced by disadvantaged and marginalised young people such as Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation and detoxification facilities, literacy and numeracy programs are a priority.

Government must ensure that Personal Support Programme does not put any blame on the individual and recognises that individual problems are bi-products of the failings of our system.

1. What are the greatest needs of people targeted by the new Personal Support Programme and what types of assistance works best?

Greatest needs include: responses to homelessness, drug and alcohol, mental health, literacy and numeracy.

Some young people have multi-vocational obstacles, these are long term issues, which require bigger solutions – beds, detox, etc.

Centrelink needs to work with other Government and community agencies to ensure there are places available when people are in crisis and need.

2. How can we define appropriate milestones for each individual so that we can monitor their progress?

Milestones should have a timeline attached. They need to be personalised and set on an individual basis.

Milestones must relate to stabilizing of various obstacles a young person might be facing.

Centrelink must build relationship with community sector that may know and could help to negotiate milestones among all parties.

3. How can we make sure that people are being referred to, and are receiving, the right assistance?

Centrelink needs to separate its various functions. A Basic Living Allowance is a minimum right of every young person. This payment should be provided to all young people in need without any obligation or conditions attached to it.

Further assistance can be provided as negotiated through an intensive assistance process, taking to account young peoples choice and life circumstances.

A fair deal for people with disabilities

1. Can we do more to encourage people with disabilities to participate socially and/or economically?

Participation must be by choice and the focus must be on different abilities rather than on disability.

2. What different processes or types of assistance might we need for people with a range of disability types and circumstances?

Centrelink must undertake specific consultation with people with a range of abilities and listen to them.

3. How can we do more to encourage businesses and the community to generate better opportunities for people with disabilities?

The government must lead the way by recognising and valuing what every individual can offer to the broader community. The government can also provide education and training for the business and community sectors to reduce the disadvantages faced by this marginalised group.

Helping parents return to work

When it is considered across the board that people with disabilities and primary caregivers, particularly single parents, just because they are of workforce age, are **required** to participate in order to receive income support. This implies a number of ideas, which in fact are contradictory to current federal government priorities such as *Strengthening Families* and *Strengthening Communities*. For example, it devalues the work performed by sole parents in their parenting roles, and that in their parenting roles they are often 'working' as volunteers in tuckshops, homework support, school reading groups etc. This is not to mention driving, coaching, supporting children and young people with dance lessons, basketball, baseball and the range of other activities that parents support in their communities.

1. What would be the most useful information to include in the Participation Pack?

The information pack can include examples of the way different people participate in the social life of their community. This information needs to be much broader than the focus on employment.

Other useful information may include, options for training and education as well as specific information based on local opportunities.

2. How can we ensure that appropriate opportunities for parents to participate are available?

Appropriateness of new opportunities can only be achieved by direct participation of parents in the decision-making. Centrelink must ask this question from parents and develop further opportunities to respond to the identified needs.

3. What should we do in rural and remote areas, or other areas, where opportunities to participate may be limited?

YANQ encourages the Government to consult directly with parents in rural and remote areas. The voice of this group must be heard.

Parenting is work and vocation and deserves to be recognised. By directly consulting with parents, Centrelink can develop an understanding of the level of work and community engagement already undertaken. Centrelink can further assist in enhancing those opportunities in a manner, which best suits, the parents themselves.

Centrelink must recognise school kids support as volunteer involvement in activity agreements.

Helping people to find jobs

Government must focus on creating new jobs. The quality and quantity of jobs available to young people needs to increase significantly. Government must recognise this as a national priority. Government must immediately stop blaming young people for high rates of youth unemployment and recognise that blaming young people further marginalises an already disadvantaged group.

Government must also consider the unacceptable high rate of youth unemployment, when supporting free trade and globalisation of economy.

Working Credit – to reward paid work

1. How can we make it easiest for people to report their earnings every fortnight?

Put in place a phone line dedicated to this issue. Centrelink could also investigate and trial a number of other mechanisms such as electronic mail, personal appointments and the role of advocates.

2. What particular issues should we consider for people with disabilities, parents and other groups who may find reporting difficult?

Centrelink must find ways of becoming flexible in order to meet the diverse needs of people. This includes providing warning to people before any change, having follow up meetings and exploring what is happening for each young person.

3. What avenues should Centrelink provide so that the reporting of earnings is as simple, easy and accessible as possible – for example, reporting by phone or over the Internet?

As stated above, YANQ believes that Centrelink should trial a range of innovative strategies with a particular focus on keeping things as simple as possible.

Conclusion

The inequities of Youth Allowance are a major concern. Youth unemployment has continued to grow whether the country is in good economic shape or in a recession. Governments in Australia must, as a national priority, boost spending on job creation until a time, that for every job available we do not have long queues of unemployed young people.

The Australian Government must acknowledge the negative effect of a globalised economy on young Australians. The Government must also acknowledge the decline in the equity of the tax system and focus on developing an alternative, which is based on principles of human rights and social justice.



