

Girls now the sum of their body parts

By Melinda Tankard Reist

Sourced from Online Opinion (Posted Monday, 24 December 2007)

The girl stood at the edge of the pool, hesitating. Her family encouraged her to join them. What was wrong? She usually loved the water. But this time it was different. She was wearing a dressing gown over her bathers. She didn't want to take it off.

"Why don't you want to go in, Lily?" her mother asked.

"Because everyone will laugh at my body

and say I'm fat," the girl replied.

My friend's daughter Lily is six. A bigger build than girls her age, but fit and healthy, leaving others behind in school races, she was denying herself the pleasures of a swim as she thought her body would be judged.

So do many others.

A Mission Australia national survey of 29,000 young people aged 11 to 24¹ released this month has found body image is the most important issue for them. The annual survey, asking young people to rank 14 issues in order of concern, puts body image ahead of family conflict, stress, bullying, alcohol and drugs and suicide. The results are disturbing, but not really surprising.

Many girls feel disgusted by their bodies, engaged in constant self-surveillance and self-criticism. Their bodies have become an all-consuming project. One in 100 Australian girls suffers anorexia nervosa. Some estimates put the rate of bulimia at as high as one in five. Children as young as eight are being hospitalised with eating disorders. Some hospitals report there are not enough beds to cope with the numbers.

A recent report found one in five 12-year-old girls regularly used fasting and vomiting to lose weight. One in four Australian girls want to get plastic surgery.

Women's Forum Australia recently produced a YouTube film clip about our new magazine-style research paper *Faking It*. (see .

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhvTybMxRBA>).

In it, a 10-year-old girl says women's magazines make her want to be thin. She planned to go on a raw fish diet.

According to Lisa Berzins, author of *Dying To Be Thin*, young girls are more

afraid of becoming fat than they are of cancer, nuclear war or losing their parents. Too many girls are trying to imitate half-starved celebrities and airbrushed models in a quest to be hot and sexy.

We have allowed the objectification and sexualisation of girls in a culture that is becoming increasingly pornographic. The embedding of sexualised images of women in society has become so mainstream, it is hardly noticed.

Everywhere a girl looks, she sees sexualised images of her gender. She's expected to be a walking billboard for the brands of the global sex industry. Playboy makeup, porn star T-shirts, padded bras and pole dancing for little girls: they're being groomed to turn tricks in their stripper chic.

The nerve-paralysing poison Botox is being pitched to teenagers as a preventative against wrinkles. Growing numbers are having breast implants. Younger women seek Brazilian waxes because their boyfriends complain they are too hairy and don't match up to how women look in porn.

Even organisations which claim to be about "empowering" girls encourage them to get their pubic hair ripped out every eight weeks. The website www.Girl.com.au promotes brazilians on a link on their home page - the same place they advertise Disney films and High School Musical 2.

Says Girl.com: "Nobody really likes hair in their private regions and it has a childlike appeal. Men love it, and are eternally curious about it." They don't appear to have a problem with linking men, waxing and childlike appeal - nor with disempowering girls by making them feel they can't be normal if their pubic regions don't imitate those of small children.

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this publication do not necessarily rep-
resent the views of YANQ.
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YANQ believes that the primary culture of Australia is Aboriginal.

We recognise that Aboriginal, Torres



Strait Islander and South Sea Islander people are 3 separate
cultures. We recognise Aboriginal people as the permanent custodians of mainland
Australia and Torres Strait Islanders as permanent custodians of the Torres Strait
Islands that are an integral part of Australia, including those areas of land and sea
whose owners have been wiped out as a result of racist politics and acts. We use
the term custodianship in the context of protection and care for the land. YANQ is
committed to respecting individuals, Murri and Islander communities. We seek to
understand their responses to policies and issues affecting them. We are commit-
ted to learning about their understandings of the impact of decisions on them.
YANQ apologises for the past and present social mistreatments of Murri and Is-
lander people created by colonisation, and is committed to supporting the healing
process.

(Continued from page 1)

Girls have been reduced to the sum of their body parts.

Research links sexualisation with three of the most common mental health prob-
lems of girls and women: eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression. The
messages delivered by a culture obsessed with body image and sex limit the free-
dom of girls to explore other facets of their lives. They need to be encouraged to
think for themselves, to be creative and imaginative, find meaning in life and make
a mark in the world.

So why aren't we doing more about it?

An urgent whole-of-government and community approach is required, recognising
what the research says and taking action. Positive body image programs in schools
should be mandatory, teaching media literacy skills that help young people recog-
nise damaging messages from popular culture.

There should also be a crack down on degrading and objectified images of women
in the public domain, including outdoor advertising, and an overhaul of the Adver-
tising Standards Board and other regulatory bodies which have failed us so badly.

Catherine, a young Melbourne artist and writer who struggles with an eating disor-
der wrote to me: "I feel it's essential that not only girls but women are able to iden-
tify the real values we should nurture and the deeply dishonest images and ideas we
are fed."

That's where a new campaign has to begin, so that Lily and her friends can go
swimming, without fearing judgment and shame.

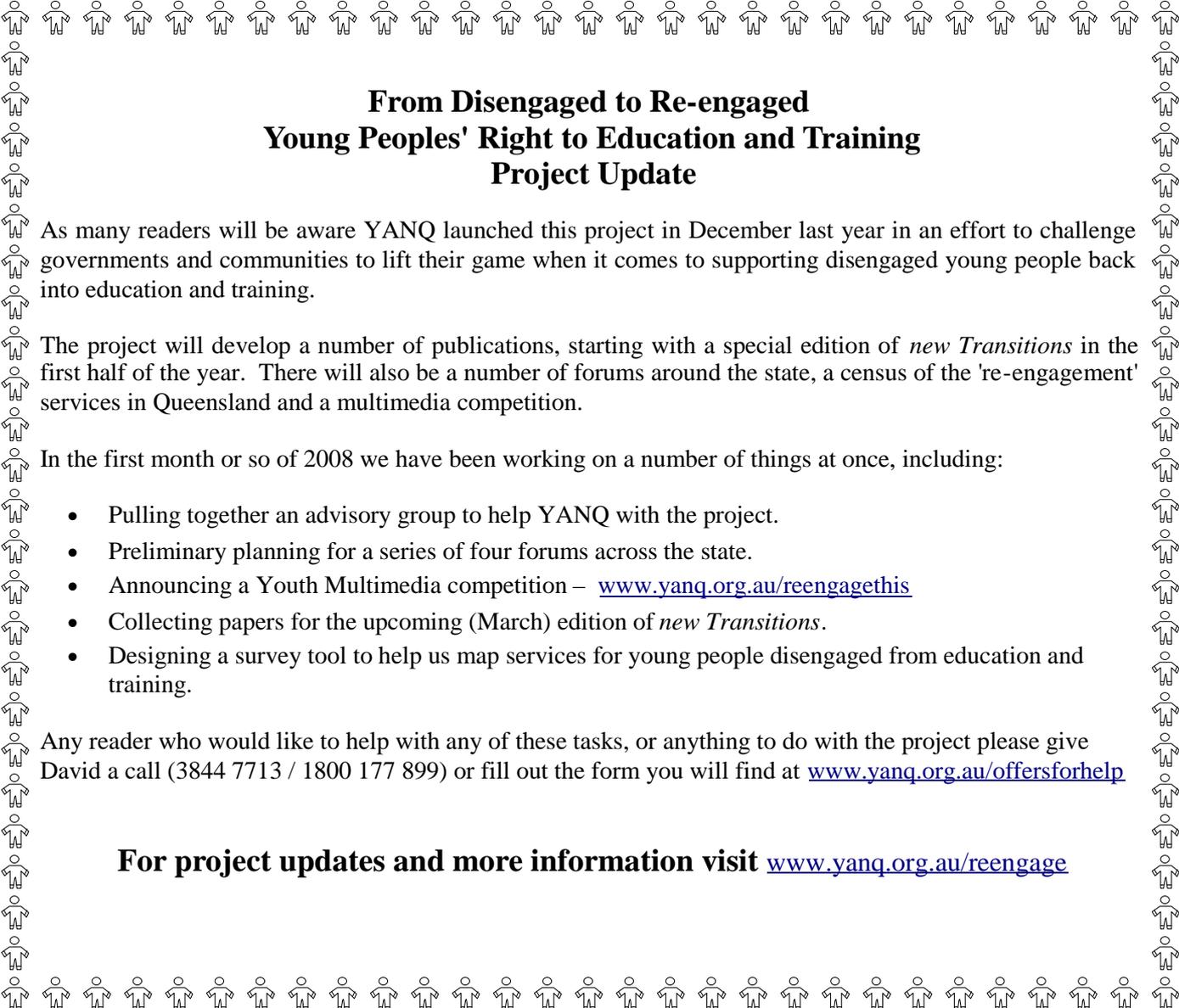
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¹ see <http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/youthsurvey/>

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From Disengaged to Re-engaged Young Peoples' Right to Education and Training Project Update

As many readers will be aware YANQ launched this project in December last year in an effort to challenge governments and communities to lift their game when it comes to supporting disengaged young people back into education and training.

The project will develop a number of publications, starting with a special edition of *new Transitions* in the first half of the year. There will also be a number of forums around the state, a census of the 're-engagement' services in Queensland and a multimedia competition.

In the first month or so of 2008 we have been working on a number of things at once, including:

- Pulling together an advisory group to help YANQ with the project.
- Preliminary planning for a series of four forums across the state.
- Announcing a Youth Multimedia competition – www.yanq.org.au/reengagethis
- Collecting papers for the upcoming (March) edition of *new Transitions*.
- Designing a survey tool to help us map services for young people disengaged from education and training.

Any reader who would like to help with any of these tasks, or anything to do with the project please give David a call (3844 7713 / 1800 177 899) or fill out the form you will find at www.yanq.org.au/offersforhelp

For project updates and more information visit www.yanq.org.au/reengage

Compact Negotiations Underway

In November of last year the Queensland Government agreed to negotiate a Compact with Community Services Sector in Queensland. This follows two years of intense lobbying by the Queensland Community Services Sector Futures Forum and is the result of lots of hard work by the peaks to bring together a more pro-active and positive future for not-for-profit community organisations in this State.

The Compact will be across six government departments: Communities, Disabilities Service Queensland, Queensland Health, Department of Housing, Department of Child Safety and Department of Justice and Attorney General and will be signed by the Futures Forum on behalf of the Sector.

The Compact will be jointly developed by government and the sector through an inter-sector reference group with representatives from each. The Community Services Futures Forum and Department of Communities are leading the process.

Work on a draft Compact document commenced in December with consultation with the sector planned for March / April. This will be an important opportunity for everyone to have input into this momentous piece of work.

For more information on the progress of the compact please see the QCOSS website: www.qcoss.org.au or contact director@yanq.org.au

Update on the Campaign for a Youth Services Multi Employer Agreement

“Quality Youth Services for Young People”

In June last year YANQ and the Australian Services Union (ASU) announced (1) that we were embarking on a joint campaign to lift the pay and conditions of youth workers. Below is a brief update on how the campaign is progressing.

Why we started the campaign

As we said at the time of the announcement, delivering **quality youth services** for young people is impossible without quality, professional youth workers. Unfortunately one of the most pressing challenges facing youth services in Queensland is retaining and attracting good staff and as a result young people are missing out. One of the main reasons for this is that the pay and conditions of workers in the non-government sector have failed to grow at a suitable rate to entice and keep staff.

The aim of the campaign is to negotiate a Multi-Employer Agreement (MEA) that will, at the very least, create the legal mechanism through which improved pay and conditions can be achieved over the next few years.

What needs to be done to ensure success

If we are to have any chance of success, we will need:

1. To increase the numbers of non-government youth workers that are members of their union. Presently only 7-8% of staff in non-government human services are members of the Union. We aim to lift this (within the youth sector) to 50%.
2. A number of Youth services that are committed to negotiating a Multi-Employer Agreement.
3. The agreement of funding bodies to fund the improvements that are negotiated into the MEA.

94 youth workers joined the Union
between July and September.

15 organisations have committed
to the negotiations.

This is a good start but more is
required.

Visit www.yanq.org.au/mea for
details on how you can join this
campaign.

Union membership

We need to increase the levels of Union Membership for two reasons. First to send a clear signal to employers and funding bodies that youth workers support this campaign. The second is to ensure that the ASU has the resources it needs to continue this campaign.

Join the Union Now and show your support – visit <http://asuqld.asn.au/>

In the first 3 months of the campaign the ASU welcomed 94 new members! These new members have all been offered 12 months free membership/subscription of YANQ as a small token of thanks .

94 new union members is an excellent start but this represents just a small overall increase. In the New Year we will continue encouraging staff of non-government youth services to join the ASU. To read more on the importance of joining the union visit <http://www.yanq.org.au/content/view/653/71/>.

Youth services commitment to the MEA

A Multi-Employer Agreement is an agreement between a number of services and their employees (represented by their Union). Presently 15 youth services have indicated that they will participate in negotiations.

The ASU and YANQ are very encouraged by this and we are expecting that more services will come on board in 2008.

Government support

YANQ and the ASU have started meetings with Government Departments about the campaign. In December we met with representatives of the Minister for Communities and are waiting on a response to a number of questions which we raised.

We will provide updates on the support of the Department of Communities and other funding bodies via the campaign page at www.yanq.org.au/mea.

For Campaign updates visit www.yanq.org.au/mea

Links

1: <http://www.yanq.org.au/content/view/303/71/>

2: <http://www.yanq.org.au/unionoffer>

Working with Multicultural Youth: Programs, Strategies and Future Directions

A summary by Margaret El-Chami from Multicultural Mental Health Australia that appeared in the *Young Voices* edition of *Synergy*

Working with Multicultural Youth: Programs, Strategies and Future Directions is the second of two papers produced by the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) for the Australian Research Alliance on Children and Youth. It builds on the first paper, **Multicultural Youth in Australia: Settlement and Transition**.

This second paper, prepared by Dr Steve Francis and Sarah Cornfoot, focuses on improving programs for young people from CALD backgrounds across Australia and devising useful strategies for the future.

It outlines key issues within the human services sector in working with young people from CALD backgrounds regarding access and equity, funding frameworks, staffing and training issues, and representation of multicultural youth issues at a policy and planning level.

It also discusses programs available for young people from CALD backgrounds and outlines useful approaches for good practice and recommendations for future directions.

The paper concludes with a valuable series of tables outlining some key programs for young people from CALD backgrounds in each state and territory that addresses the areas of need.

This article is only a summary of the paper. A full copy of the paper can be downloaded from www.cmyi.net.au/Home.

Across the different areas of health – general health, mental health and sexual health – there are some common issues such as a lack of services for young people from CALD backgrounds. Multicultural services are considered useful, however they are often unable to adequately address the specific and often complex needs of refugee or migrant young people.

Regarding mental health, there are additional issues of complex need especially in addressing identity and settlement in the context of adolescence. Regarding sexual health there are unique issues relating to cultural sanctions on discussing sexual health and sexuality, and a lack of culturally appropriate information and services.

Nationally, there are a number of refugee health clinics that provide important services to newly arrived refugees such as the Queensland Integrated Refugee Community Health Clinic. There are also multicultural health services and special information programs run by various Migrant Resource Centres, however few offer services specifi-

cally targeting young people.

There are some youth health services that offer inclusive programs, such as Corner Youth Health Service and High St Youth Health Service in Sydney. But overall few are specifically for migrant and refugee young people.

The difficulty is the lack of coordinated and funded health information programs. These services are often part of or added to broader programs and thus may lack resources and trained staff.

Newly arrived refugee young people are able to access counselling from torture and trauma services, some of which are specifically developed for the needs of young people. For instance STARTTS NSW and Foundation House in Victoria draw on tailored approaches such as the use of art and music to explore emotions.

Torture and trauma services also provide group programs for young people to explore emotions and experiences. The Queensland Program for Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma runs a 10-week support program for young people which explores the past, present and future in a group setting. This requires skilled workers and access to individual counselling services.

Youth mental health has been identified as a key issue in recent years. As noted above, young people from CALD backgrounds access general services, however it is important to have specific services that are culturally appropriate and accessible, particularly as some services are not available for free or have strict conditions of availability.

Ideally, mental health services need to have access to a range of bicultural/bilingual counsellors, and be covered by government funding. A valuable example is the NSW Transcultural Mental Health Centre, which currently accesses 150 bilingual mental health clinicians in 55 languages. This service is free of charge and available to all NSW residents.

Services that work with young people from CALD backgrounds often have individual projects to promote young people's wellbeing including school holiday programs. For example, CMYI and partners in the north west of Melbourne recently ran a successful school holiday program called '*YES (Relaxation program)*' that focused on enhancing newly arrived young people's wellbeing through yoga and relaxation techniques, as well as recreation activities, creative projects and orientation.

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In addition to mental health, there is a perception that drugs are more prevalent among young people from CALD backgrounds than other groups. However there is limited data in this area to support this. Regardless, there is a need for culturally appropriate health promotion and support services around drug and alcohol misuse for refugee and migrant communities.

Those that do exist include general community education and sector capacity building (eg: the Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre in Sydney); programs for multicultural groups (eg: the North Richmond Community Health Centre in Melbourne, which provides outreach, support and education particularly for the Vietnamese and Cambodian communities); and individual health promotion projects (eg: Multicultural Youth South Australia's involvement in that state government's *Party Safe* initiative).

Overall there is a continued need for culturally appropriate education and support, and targeted projects for specific issues such as prescription drug misuse.

There is also a need for broad strategies towards promoting effective program development and delivery for young people from CALD backgrounds.

This paper suggests a number of recommendations including developing a national refugee youth settlement strategy to which young people's settlement needs could be accommodated within existing funding and frameworks across all government departments. The strategy would outline the best approach for service coordination, capacity building, policy advice and advocacy around refugee youth issues to be implemented within each state jurisdiction.

It also suggests an on-arrival case coordination model that would provide a holistic needs analysis and tailored support for all newly arrived young people and their families should also be considered. This would involve establishing a rating system to determine the level of care needed and the level of other assistance required for each newly arrived young person and their family.

A critical component of settlement support for young people is orientation to Australian social, economic, educational and community service systems as well as to our cultural norms. Community-based recreation and activities programs offer a good site for providing some of this information, as do education settings.

Refugee and migrant parents lack support to adapt to Australian expectations while maintaining their cultural and family norms. Caring family relationships may break down following unresolved conflict or communication difficulties. However, early support can avoid some of these consequences.

Therefore support for refugee and migrant youth leadership and youth-led initiatives is also a key component in the provision of holistic support for young people. If young people are to play a role as decisionmakers and citizens, they need support to understand our sociopolitical systems. They also need encouragement to develop confidence, share skills and take up roles in sustainable community organisations. When resourced to do so, young people, families and community leaders are well placed to find solutions for existing problems and advise governments of potentially effective responses.

Supporting community education programs that build understanding of refugees and migrants is also critical. Social campaigning that encourages open reflection, dialogue and improved understanding between Australian-born and recently arrived community members will have a significant and positive impact on the settlement prospects of young people.

In order to review and evaluate services and outcomes for refugee and migrant young people, a systematic and consistent level of data must be collected. It is recommended that a national research project be undertaken to ground the development of a national framework for refugee and migrant youth settlement. Such a project could include a comprehensive mapping of services and of young people's use of services, to ascertain the degree to which young people are seeking support and having their needs met.

Organisations that work with young people from CALD backgrounds recognise the need for a flexible approach to service delivery, but have difficulty accessing funding for this. Likewise there are few funded drop-in centres with staff available. There is a need to develop and evaluate flexible service models and to promote funding for flexible service delivery.

In addition to this, professional development and training for generalist and government services also need to be enhanced to support culturally and linguistically responsive practice. Alongside building skills and expertise, mechanisms to improve coordination between services should be enhanced. Sharing of resources, discussion of good practice and analysis of emerging youth issues should be funded components of refugee and migrant youth programs in each state and territory. There is a need for support and adequate funding of those working with young people from CALD backgrounds, and in particular support for bicultural workers.

Overall there is also a need for a formalised policy-driven voice on multicultural youth issues at the national level. While CMYI provides strategic advice at both the state and national levels, and while NYMIN has begun to link multicultural workers in the states and territories, there remains a critical need for a coordin-

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ated, formalised and consistent advocacy on multicultural youth issues.

This is only a summary of the paper, **Working with Multicultural Youth: Programs, Strategies and Future Directions**. A full copy can be downloaded from www.cmyi.net.au/Home. This summary can also be found in the *Young Voices* edition of Synergy – a publication produced by Multicultural Mental Health Australia www.mmha.org.au

The preceding Summary has been reproduced with the permission of Margaret El-Chami, Communications, Media & Information Coordinator, Multicultural Mental Health Australia. margaret.el-chami@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au

Multicultural Update for February 2008

A note on MYNQ:

The first MYNQ meeting of 2008 will be held from 10-12 at the Ahimsa venue, 20 Horan St, West End on Tuesday 18th March.

On the agenda for this meeting will be a brief about YANQ's current research project on youth disengagement and reengagement from education and training. There will also be opportunity for attendees not only to share information and ideas, but also to provide input on the format of future MYNQ meetings.

In addition, at this first meeting, the dates for the remaining MYNQ meetings for 2008 will be decided upon and confirmed. Further information will be released shortly.

To RSVP your attendance at the MYNQ meeting, please email Kirsten at cald@yanq.org.au, Marilyn at admin@yanq.org.au or phone (07) 3844 7713.

Child Migrant Roundtable:

Recently YANQ's Multicultural Development Officer (MDO) attended a roundtable meeting of the Migrant Child Project, at the University of Sydney. Delegates from the University, YANQ, DIAC, HREOC, RCOA and Harvard University's Committee on Human Rights Studies (amongst others) met with the aim of developing a research agenda focusing on migrant children. The project committee's previous research on the subject (Seeking Asylum Alone) was outlined, and delegates workshopped and brainstormed ideas on how this new network of people and organisations could advance this research in new ways that would further benefit children and young people, particularly those who are recent migrants or children of migrants to Australia.

Themes discussed included, but were not limited to: children and immigration detention; a comparative exploration of migrant children research in America, Australia and the United Kingdom; and the ramifications of Australia's 'Pacific Solution'.

Importantly, research has shown that in many child migrants' cases, the child is often viewed by the immigration authority and/or in-country law body as an immigrant first and a child second. While this perspective may have immediate detrimental influence on the child's situation and on their access to their international rights as a child, there also may be significant social and legal ramifications related to the potential increase of children who are 'sent ahead' or in lieu of any other family members in the hope that as a child, immigration laws will restrict, confine or oppress them far less so than if they were adult immigrants or as part of a family attempting to immigrate or seek asylum. (eg. That their application for residency or asylum will be far more easily granted if as a child, they travel alone.)

Further, research has indicated that many first and second generation Australian children and young people, whose parents and grandparents were immigrants, themselves face and endure many of the same issues as recent migrants. As such, a number of research options were highlighted in relation to the needs of these groups of young people as well.

Further information related to the 2008 research agenda of the Migrant Child Project has yet to be released.

Importantly though, the Statewide Multicultural Youth Issues Network (SMYIN) of Victoria will be meeting at the end of this month to discuss some of these issues (namely the needs of second generation migrant young people); a topic that YANQ not only will be liaising closely with the Centre of Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) about, and but will also be gauging response and ideas about within the Multicultural Youth Network of Queensland (MYNQ) membership base.

Mind the gap

Considering the participation of refugee young people

by Jen Couch

The concept of youth participation has become a familiar and increasingly accepted component of youth work practice, programming and funding in Australia. It is a development well deserved, for age can be as much of an impediment to full enfranchisement in public life as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and gender. Indeed, age is often coupled with one or more of these factors to create significant barriers to young people's ability to shape the institutions and community contexts that affect their lives. Generally, participation is regarded as a "good thing" and has been embraced by non-government organisations (NGOs), development agencies and governments. But, despite the enthusiastic championing of the idea, most of the work regarding participation for young people in Australia has focused chiefly on Anglo-Australian young people.

There have been far fewer participation-based projects with refugee young people and, indeed, far less is known about how to engage refugee young people. This article discusses the benefits and risks of involving refugee young people and argues that it is time for a more critical understanding of participation in relation to refugee young people.

Being a refugee young person

Young refugees' resettlement experiences often involve them confronting a number of barriers. Newly arrived and emerging communities are often at risk due to limited family and social support, and underdeveloped support and minimal infrastructure within their communities. Mainstream services and programs are not always culturally appropriate and lack flexibility – factors which prevent young people from participating. In

addition, there are few specialist refugee youth services that cater for those with complex needs. There is also often little coordination between government departments and community and education sectors in relation to planning to meet the needs of refugee young people. Because young people from refugee backgrounds may have witnessed or experienced state-sanctioned violence, many are suspicious of government authorities or those perceived to be in authority roles.

Participation

Participation in the context of development discourse is today char-

In the area of young people and participation, it is sometimes assumed that more is better; however, after many years of experience working with and researching refugee youth, Jen Couch has observed that refugee young people may be placed at risk if participatory programs are ill-conceived and underresearched. She reminds the reader that participation must not be considered an 'ideological absolute' but rather a useful tool for empowering young people and improving their self-esteem. If programs involve families and the wider community, there is a greater chance that everybody will be able to successfully negotiate and accept the changes that participation will make to young people's lives.

acterised by two paradoxes. The first is the trend towards the standardisation of approaches. This trend appears to be contradictory to the goal of participation whereby direction is moulded and shaped by the participants themselves. Standardisation is theoretically impossible in this context. The second paradox relates to the growth of a body of technical knowledge on empowerment that threatens to take the empowerment aspect of the participatory process away from communities and place it in the hands of experts.

The notion of participation is complex and sometimes ambiguous. Definitions can range from consultation to full empowerment and the concept has even been likened to a trojan horse that hides the fact that coercion and manipulation are its basic motivations (Slocum & Tho-

mas-Slayter 1995). It is, however, now generally recognised that participation must be part of any community development process. The term is commonly used to indicate involvement in planning and decision-making, as in Hart's (1992, p.5) definition of:

the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.

A broader definition is offered by van Beers (1995, p.6):

listening to [young people], giving them space to articulate their own concerns and, taking into account the children's maturity and capacities, enabling them to take part in the planning, conduct and evaluation of activities, within or outside the family sphere, which may imply involving them in decision making.

Hart's "ladder of participation" (cited in Van Beers 1995, p.6) is a well-known attempt to model

youth participation that places the concept along a continuum from manipulative through tokenistic participation to forms of participation in which young people are involved in initiating activities and sharing decisions with adults. However, it is rarely possible to use this scale to locate levels of actual participation, as the situation within a particular project may be complex and possibly contradictory.

Participation involving young people is most often considered as consultation, a tool regularly used by government and non-government agencies to gain an insight into the views and opinions of the whole or specific segments of the community. However, young people actively participate in a broad range of areas, including research, strategy

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development, program development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, governance and policy development. For young people whose perspectives are often marginalised or ignored, these are particularly important areas for participation that enable their “voices” to be heard by government, their peers and in their communities. Therefore, while consultation provides young people with an opportunity to participate and influence decision-making and future planning, it does not extend to young people having formal decision-making roles.

Tolfee (cited in Boyden, Ling & Myers 1998) stresses that the main resource in any project is young people. In fact he warns:

at the very least, the need to consult [young people] about their own perception of their needs, problems and resources is an essential precondition for the development of programs designed to support and assist them. Programs based entirely on adult perceptions of [young people’s] needs and priorities are almost certainly destined to “get it wrong” and hence waste valuable resources.

Checkoway and Richards-Schuster (2004) support the necessity for young people’s control and ownership when they note that youth participation is more effective when young people are “directors” or “partners” rather than simply “subjects” (p.85). It is not so much who initiates the process but whether young people are meaningfully involved, “... its quality is effective when they have an impact on a process, influence a decision, or produce an outcome” (Checkoway 1998).

In turning to the question of the involvement of refugee young people in youth participation processes, the marginal social and economic status of this population makes it even more important that inclusion is meaningful and not piecemeal. Processes that include refugee young people in decision-making, through political processes at local, state and national levels, must be developed in partnership with young people themselves.

A “more is better” approach to youth

participation is not necessarily always the best or most appropriate way of involving young people. This point must be considered whenever young people are participating, but especially so when it comes to the involvement of refugee young people. For example, the consultative process with refugee communities may itself result in the promotion of adult concerns rather than accurately reflect the lives and priorities of young people. The input and participation of refugee young people may become tokenistic if this possibility is not addressed.

The potential benefits of refugee youth participation

To identify and analyse the potential benefits of involving refugee young people it is important to move beyond the rhetoric of participation being a “good thing” or “politically correct” and identify more precisely what the benefits for refugee young people might be.

Young peoples commitment is enhanced by their participation

One question to be considered in regard to participation is whether refugee young people should be treated any differently from other young people with whom community agencies are involved. Are there particular reasons why refugee young people should be active participants in programs? The answer is, clearly, yes. Baden (1997) highlights the way in which conflict can lead to young people becoming more visible in a range of survival strategies. Almost by definition, refugee young people are those who have often taken on the responsibility for contributing to the economic and practical needs of their families. It obviously flows from this that, if young people are assuming this responsibility, they both deserve, and are capable of, exercising responsibilities in relation to programs designed to benefit them. Programs that work with refugee young people almost always work at the level of individual young people, rather than only through parents, family or

the wider community (although these are sometimes components). The organisations who work in a more participatory way regard refugee young people as resourceful, capable and competent.

Conversely, organisations that treat refugee young people as dependent, irresponsible and incompetent will quickly find this to be a self-fulfilling prophecy and will then find many reasons for continuing a non-participative way of working. In the process, if young people have had no involvement in establishing programs, they will feel little or no sense of ownership, and may have very little commitment to achieving the program’s goals. A decision not to consider young people as stakeholders in a program is difficult to justify in any circumstances.

Participation contributes to young people’s self image

White and Wyn (2004, p.37) note that exclusion of refugee young people is exacerbated by the fact that refugee young people are “considered to be outsiders in their new societies”. They state that this is “due to the manner in which ethnicity and race are socially constructed [with] ...contemporary media images and treatments of [refugee young people generally being] very negative” (White & Wyn 2004, p.45).

Social structural theorists argue that one reason for the lack of participation of marginalised young people such as refugees is the persistence of cultural perceptions that are embedded in larger structural arrangements that are reproduced through the media, market and other social processes. Refugee young people are rarely constructed as actors in the public sphere. Instead, the public discourse about all young people reflects an image of a disengaged group “at risk” of “becoming” problems (Checkoway 1998). This is even more the case for refugee young people who are labelled “minorities” and “victims”, at best,

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and thugs and gang members with no ambitions or academic ability, at worst (Sercombe 1999). As a result, it is not surprising that opportunities for young refugees tend not to focus on positive engagement. Instead the community spaces tend to reflect a society that is fixated on the negative space of gang violence, drug dealing and possible incarceration (Ogilvie & Lynch 1999).

Participation can be a vital and powerful ingredient in helping refugee young people change their often very negative images of themselves and, in the process, raise their sense of self-esteem. Involving young people actively as participants might help them to value themselves as people who are contributing both to their families and wider society. Collective activities may reinforce this positive identity.

It is my experience that when refugee young people do come to value themselves more highly, there are two important results. First, young people have increased energy to tackle some of the many problems and issues that resettlement raises. Second, they create bonds with other young people. This often leads to young people looking beyond their own immediate needs and playing a significant role in community development activities. If a high level of participation can lead to young people seeing themselves as agents of change in communities and societies, then, conversely, a traditional welfare approach can instil in young people a self-perception that they are powerless and need to be “rescued”. If programs work in such a way as to reinforce young people’s image of themselves as passive victims of their circumstances and passive recipients of services, they may become more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

The trauma associated with the refugee experience challenges young people’s understanding of the meaning and purpose of life, and their identity formation can be damaged (Pridmore 1998, p.159). When trauma has shattered a young person’s sense of self in the world, an important step can be

to involve the young person in activities that build trust and identity. There seems good reason to believe not only that participation enhances young people’s self-esteem and sense of wellbeing; but that it is also a vital ingredient in resilience.

Participation may enhance young people’s resilience

When young people have opportunities to participate meaningfully, there is evidence that resilience is enhanced and that this leads to a greater sense of autonomy, independence and social competence (Richman & Bowen 1997). Resilience refers to the capacity to do well, and is seen as an alternative and positive approach to the focus on the risks and problems that young people face. Fraser and Galinsky (1997, p.272) identify the concept of empowerment as being significant, suggesting that it:

... includes combining a sense of control with the ability to affect the behaviour of others, a focus on enhancing strengths in individuals or communities, a goal of establishing equity in the distribution of resources, an ecological (rather than individual) form of analysis for understanding individual and community phenomena, and a belief that power is not a scarce commodity but rather one that can be generated.

Participation in action

My work with refugee young people in the 1980s with the Western Young People’s Independent Network (WYPIN) – a group of refugee and migrant young people in Melbourne’s west who pioneered highly participatory practices – revealed that a highly participatory approach gave young people opportunities that, when taken seriously by them, can change their future and increase their knowledge, experience and human capital. The young people involved in WYPIN were articulate, confident and competent. They were capable of facing the immediate demands of their lives, and of having ambitions that they pursued in a realistic manner.

Participation allowed the young people to experience themselves and each other in a new way and to

form relationships. They acquired new social and practical skills as well as a sense of their own potential. They learned to analyse their circumstances more thoroughly, to argue a case, to identify the problems instead of just reacting to them, and to seek systematically to overcome them. By working with each other and by tackling common problems together, they built an experience of solidarity, equality, sharing, affection and cooperation.

However, despite these positive outcomes, it should not be forgotten that tension can develop between young people and their families and community when young people become more resilient. Resilience, autonomy and independence are characteristics highly valued in the West (parents and teachers enthusiastically encourage their development in young people), but, from the perspective of a refugee family/community, they may seem corrosive to tradition and culture. It is, therefore, not surprising that in some refugee communities the terms autonomy and independence carry with them the threat of further fragmentation and the loss of their young people.

While we have considered some of the benefits of participation for programs for refugee young people, it is important to acknowledge that adopting a participative approach is neither easy nor without its challenges.

The challenges of participation for refugee young people

Cultural constraints

In most societies, young people enjoy less social power than adults. Even the relatively conservative statements in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child may go well beyond what many parents and others involved with refugee young people would consider acceptable and appropriate in their cultural context. Agencies that adopt a highly participatory approach attempt to make young people more

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aware of their rights, and more confident, active and assertive in demanding their rights. Young people are allowed to participate, and to exercise responsibility, which may be in stark contrast to the reality in other areas of their lives. For many communities, the prospect of young people's empowerment may represent a major shift in social functioning and may be unwelcome to adults for whom it means a loss of power and control. Parents and community members have the ability to thwart young people's efforts if these are perceived to threaten the status of older adults.

This conflict may be most acutely felt in the lives of young people where family units have experienced dramatic changes or where parents are limited in asserting their own rights. In these situations, intergenerational difference may be exacerbated by the perceived empowerment of young people (Kaspar 1998, p.181). However working with young people in isolation from their family situations and expectations risks loosening family ties that may be the young person's first line of protection.

It is, therefore, impossible to pursue the best interests of the young person without working closely with adults – parents, teachers and community leaders – in order to ensure the safety and sustainability of participatory projects. Families must be part of the foundation for any holistic approach to the participation of refugee young people. It is vital, therefore, to stress the importance of family connections and to provide ample opportunity for family views to be heard and discussed in the process.

When adequate attention is paid to the importance of links between refugee young people and their families, the issues that surface virtually ensure a holistic perspective on the young people. Effective participation strategies for refugee young people are those that connect with families by providing them with information about the context of young people's participation in projects, and by involving siblings in activities. Projects

that focus on sport and recreation, art and music can be useful avenues for involving other members of the family. Likewise, beginning a project with a family fun day or picnic can help in breaking down some of the fear families may have.

Agencies must make an effort to ensure young people and their families feel comfortable and safe in taking risks in the face of the new dynamics that will emerge in a participatory process. As far as possible, programs should support, not undermine, family solidarity. This implies that young people's participation in programs should take into account the possible impact of young people's status within the family and family wellbeing generally.

Working in a participatory way is hard work!

A commitment to working with young refugees in participatory projects requires workers to reflect carefully on the imbalance of power between the worker and the young person. Participatory projects require a reformulation of the adult role in relation to young people. How do we move beyond our roles as leaders to being facilitators? Do we have the flexibility and humility it takes to adapt the ways we work with young people?

Such reflection should begin by acknowledging one's own feelings about sharing power with young people. As noted, the worker must always consider the consequences of young people's participation in relation to their position in the family and community. This can raise challenges for youth workers who are used to working on an individual basis with young people. Thus transparency about methods and aims is essential. It is also important for the worker to have an understanding of refugee communities, including how the young people are treated culturally and how to negotiate space for intergenerational dialogue. It can be difficult to achieve a balance between young people's

leadership and a respect for cultural practice, traditional social structures and power dynamics. To what extent should we encourage young refugees to challenge the hierarchical structures that exist within their community?

A good understanding of cultural context is essential for anticipating any risk to refugee participants. Does the program take into account gender dimensions or how girls are affected when they reject traditional social roles and become leaders among their peers? Conversely, are we overly concerned about young women to the point that we neglect the risks faced by many boys? It is important to respect the diversity among refugee young people themselves.

In addition, involving young refugees in participatory projects may be difficult in contexts where they are expected to contribute to the maintenance of the household, take care of siblings, gain employment or go to school. Sometimes these responsibilities can prevent young people from taking part in projects.

Whose agendas are paramount?

Too often participation has been seen as an issue of equality rather than equity. An equality approach to how young people are included means there is an expectation that they will fit into existing structures that may be inherently exclusive. An equity approach involves analysis and identification of the different levels of exclusion, acknowledges issues of difference and formulates ways in which existing structures can accommodate those who are naturally excluded from the process (Ivan-Smith & Johnson 1998, p.296). This is not to suggest that agencies manipulate young people or encourage participation in a tokenistic sense, but it does raise the issue that the principal concerns of young people and those of the agency supporting them may not be the same.

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Whose agenda does the participatory project reflect? Many initiatives are driven by funding bodies rather than by young people themselves. Should young people from vastly different communities be brought together simply because they are all refugees? What if young people do not want to participate? Are we open to young people's varying agendas, which true participation will bring to the surface? The implication is that participatory projects are unlikely to be effective or sustainable if they are developed solely as a response to adult and funding agendas. Participatory processes require sustained commitments in terms of time and funding. How do we reconcile these long-term processes with funding needs? Adequate time is needed to develop an understanding of cultural contexts and local complexities to minimise risks for young people. Participation in this regard is not an event but a long-term process that is unlikely to be realised cheaply. A positive organisational context is fundamental to the success of participatory projects. This raises many questions about institutional barriers and how much the agency integrates the ideology of participation into their organisational culture.

Conclusion

The long-term hope behind participatory approaches is that young people will grow into citizens capable of sustaining their lives, communities and environment (Kaspar 1998, p.183). So far the effects of participation on young people's adult lives are not known. In identifying some of the challenges of participative approaches, it is hoped that none of these will be used as an excuse for inaction in the area of participatory programs for refugee young people. The intention has been to try to move to a more critical and discriminating discussion of this important issue. The need to plan programs on a basis of participatory research in which refugee young people can freely articulate their problems, needs and resources within their social world of work, family and school cannot be overestimated.

On a day-to-day basis, to deny young people at least an element of choice about what they are involved in is not only to run the risk of supplying resources they will neither use nor benefit from, it is to deny them the experiences of critical appraisal and choice that are vital for their own personal development.

On the other hand, it may be equally dangerous to accept uncritically the idea of youth participation as a universal panacea. To ignore the possible cultural dissonance that a high level of participation may impose is dangerous. It is also important to avoid the danger of participation becoming a "sacred cow" or an ideological absolute that precludes any other form of intervention that might be criticised as "welfarist". Similarly the simplistic incorporation of youth participation because "it seems like a good idea", without carefully considering the implications for young people, families, staff and others, is naive. Young refugees are both put at risk and benefit by involvement in participatory projects:

In cultures that are resistant to participatory activities, the risk arises simply by their involvement. Enabling young people to develop alternative thought processes can render them vulnerable over a lifetime. An idealised outcome is to enable them to question dominant values, issues and paradigms in their cultures; but without appropriate support, they can become isolated in their ideas, weakened and, in the worst scenarios, threatened or punished (Kaspar 1998, p.183).

The issue of the possible negative impact of participatory approaches on the families of refugee young people has been identified, although the evidence of this is not unequivocal. A tentative conclusion from my experience is that highly participatory approaches are most likely to be effective and to avoid the likelihood of setting up conflicts in the family if they are accompanied by a high level of family participation. However, the role of participation within cultures that are resistant to its methods and ideals must be evaluated, and culturally specific meanings of young people's partici-

pation must be examined, if young people's capacities and needs are to be met effectively.

There is a tendency in some agencies to focus on interventions that impact on risk and vulnerability, but which ignore the issue of young people's self-esteem and overall psycho-social wellbeing. Any program that claims to concern itself with the whole young person, and a whole range of needs, must take into account the vital issue of refugee young people's settlement experience, alienation and society's denial of their status and worth. It is through active participation – being treated as social subjects capable of taking action for themselves to transform their lives – that refugee young people are most likely to develop as confident human beings with a strong sense of identity and self worth.

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Youth Studies Australia

HOMELESSNESS

Homes for homeless children

MIA DAMBACH looks at options to juvenile detention centres

In NSW, the courts have the power to impose residential requirements under section 36(2)(a) *Bail Act 1978* in relation to bail. The courts often make it a condition of bail for children charged with criminal offences, who are homeless or in need of care¹, that they 'reside as directed by the Department of Community Services' (DoCS). This approach is adopted especially when children are under 16, are homeless, or do not have carers or appropriate parental supervision. The residential condition is imposed to ensure a greater likelihood that the child will attend court for the next hearing of their matter, and to ensure that their whereabouts are known.

The difficulty is that if the child is in 'need of care', and DoCS fail to find accommodation for the child, detention is likely the 'default' outcome. Magistrate Mulroneo told the Sun Herald in February 2006, 'You see quite a few kids who end up in fairly substandard accommodation or they will end up staying in custody because a place can't be found for them.'² In the same newspaper report, DoCS maintained that they were not responsible for finding accommodation.

This view is contrary to section 9(e) *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (CYP Act) which states:

If a child or young person is temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or cannot be allowed to remain in that environment in his or her own best interests, the child or young person is entitled to special protection and assistance from the State.

Similar provisions creating specific responsibilities to find accommodation also exist in sections 74, 113 and 120 of the (CYP Act). Clearly, DoCS are delegated as the Government's representative responsible for children in need of care and protection,

which arguably includes those that are homeless.

Accordingly, this Brief examines firstly, the DoCS abdication of this delegated responsibility and secondly, the consequences of this abdication, including breaches of international law. In the last section, the article discusses some law reform proposals to help counter this lamentable situation.

DoCS' abdication

When DoCS fail to find accommodation for children who are in need of care, the only practical alternative is detention. In practice, when DoCS decline to make a direction that a child reside somewhere, the child cannot enter into their bail undertaking and must remain in detention. In some situations, children can remain in detention for a number of weeks, which is especially concerning when it is likely that they will not receive a custodial penalty when their matters are finalised. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) in NSW is continuing its work in collecting a number of case studies on this very point to establish whether the detention of children in these cases is lawful.

Lawyers for the Children's Court have found that DoCS can be even more reluctant to find accommodation when children do not obey their directions (eg: attend certain schools or accept certain house rules). The result is that the *Bail Act 1978* is used as a tool to punish children who fail to obey the sometimes unreasonable directions of the DoCS. Regrettably, for children in need of care, their punishment is detention even though granted bail whereas children from more stable backgrounds, but who do not obey similar directions, are often punished by other means such as being grounded or limited in phone calls.

It is conceded that the DoCS are under-resourced and there are lim-

ited accommodation options for children, especially for those who are difficult to manage. Yet in practice DoCS prioritises other cases — such as those children subject to sexual abuse — rather than respond adequately to the needs of children charged with criminal offences. Moreover, the DoCS can be swayed by the belief that the optimal outcome is for children to be in the controlled environment of detention rather than to be 'out of control' in the community.

Consequences of the DoCS abdication

The abdication by the DoCS of its responsibility to find appropriate accommodation for children is a misuse of the NSW Government's limited resources, administrative maltreatment of the children in their care, and contravention of international law.

The use of detention as substitute accommodation is expensive and unjustified. Professor Cunneen has found that 'current costs for detention in a juvenile justice centre are \$498 per young person per day or \$3486 per week. The comparable costs for a young person under community supervision are \$35.91 per day.'³ By having more children in need of care in detention, the inevitable result is also that the detention centre population in terms of remand numbers will increase. This is problematic for detention centre limited resources and can have a detrimental impact on programs and conditions in detention centres. Professor Cunneen further argues that 'if the remand population continues to increase there are important implications for the running of detention centres: the focus must shift away from programs and development towards security warehousing.'⁴

Alternative community-based options have greater benefits for the

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community and the child. Placing children in detention centres is punitive, as studies have shown that institutionalisation fosters delinquency and recidivism.

*Prisons are undeniably powerful social settings that have a decisive impact upon the construction and/or maintenance of social identities. If an individual's most defining experiences of growing up are primarily based within a prison environment, it will seem unlikely that such experiences will equip that individual for a life removed from criminal sub-cultures.*⁵

Research has also shown that the refusal of bail can lead to a deprivation of income, education, loss of employment and the child being taken away from the community supports.⁶

Moreover, the failure of the DoCS to find appropriate accommodation for homeless children is a clear contravention of international law. Rules 34 and 38 of the *United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency* (The Riyadh Guidelines) place a clear obligation on the State to provide accommodation.⁷

Implicit in these rules is that detention is inappropriate and if it is to be used, other international law principles dictate that detention should be only used as a last resort and for the shortest amount of time. Article 37(b) of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* 1989 (hereafter CROC) states that 'No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily.'⁸

The use of detention for homeless children is not in their best interests (Article 3.1 CROC) nor does it promote their well being (Rule 17.1(d) *United Nations 'Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice'* (Beijing Rules)).

The failure of the Government to provide non-custodial options is unac-

ceptable in light of such international principles and reforms are urgently required.

Possible law reform to counter DoCS abdication

Better alternatives for protecting society and monitoring alleged offenders need to be developed rather than using detention as a first resort. In practice, the DoCS should not wait for when they have meetings with all stakeholders before they

Another possible avenue that needs to be explored is child-specific bail hostels. Hostels are temporary refugees for children in the short-term, giving Government agencies such as DoCS time to find long-term options. These hostels could be connected to educational resources in order to provide better employment opportunities. However stakeholders in Queensland did not adopt the 'bail hostel' model because of a number of limitations, including the high risk of net widening through young people's contact or contamination with more experienced offenders, insufficient funding to adequately staff a hostel, and the potential isolation of the child from their parents

approve a placement for a child. The finding of short-term accommodation should be immediate as it could take a number of weeks for long-term accommodation.

It is essential to create alternative housing where there has been family breakdown or children are effectively homeless. It is encouraging that the *Annual Report 2004/2005* of the Department of Juvenile Justice mentions the possibility of developing 'accommodation brokered through the Armidale and Tamworth Youth Refuges and the recruitment of Aboriginal Foster carers.' This is an important indication that the Government is considering other options, but these appear to be limited to rural areas.

It is equally important to develop a *comprehensive* model, where options are provided for all of a State, as seen in the bail services offered in Queensland. These more global policies are provided by the Queensland Department of Families, which worked with other stake-

holders to ensure that 'the partnerships that have developed from this process have contributed significantly to enhancing accommodation options for young people at risk of being remanded in custody.'⁹

Another possible avenue that needs to be explored is child-specific bail hostels. Hostels are temporary refugees for children in the short-term, giving Government agencies such as DoCS time to find long-term options. These hostels could be connected to educational resources in order to provide better employment opportunities. However stakeholders in Queensland did not adopt the 'bail hostel' model because of a number of limitations, including the high risk of net widening through young people's contact or contamination with more experienced offenders, insufficient funding to adequately staff a hostel, and the potential

isolation of the child from their parents.¹¹ Despite these findings, it is arguable that the NSW Government must at least consider the 'bail hostel' option in light of the inadequate accommodation services currently available.

Conclusions

Bail laws have a punitive effect on children in need of care. The main area for concern is where children are granted bail with the condition that they reside as directed by the DoCS. When the DoCS fail to find accommodation, this condition is not met and children can remain in custody for days and weeks. The ongoing application of the *Bail Act* 1978 to 'children in need of care' is costly, has minimal benefits for the community and the child and is in clear breach of international law.

Reforms such as providing more suitable accommodation for children are especially needed. Other alternatives should be investigated

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that are equally less costly for the child, their family, for society and which comply with international law. The DoCS must stop the lamentable practice of using detention as suitable accommodation for homeless children.

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BudgetLink....discount available for YANQ members!!

At YANQ Marilyn & I have been working to streamline the finances and reporting and we're a bit excited about BudgetLink!!

BudgetLink has been developed by Jeff Stephenson at Accounting Addons specifically for the community sector. It links with MYOB using the Standard Chart of Accounts (SCOA) and does all the budget analysis reports for each program (or job code), and will shortly do the acquittals for HACC, DSQ, Dept of Communities with others in the pipeline.

This means that once the data has been entered into MYOB you just bring that into BudgetLink and go from there. Imagine having the reports, acquittals etc at the push of a button! Anything that reduces the amount of time spent producing reports is a good thing.

If you want to have a chat to see how it will work for your organisation, feel free to contact me on 0403 199 351 or send your questions to jeff@accoutingaddons.com.au. Jeff is keen to see BudgetLink be accessible to YANQ members and is appreciative of the smaller agencies financial constraints.

Kathryn Harrison B Com (Acct)
Financial Consultant for the Community Sector

Australia needs a National Youth Peak organisation

Australia has been without a funded national peak body for youth affairs since AYPAC's defunding in 1998. Since its establishment in 2002 as the Australian peak body for youth affairs, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition has consistently called for the Australian Government to commit to funding AYAC.

There is now an opportunity for AYAC to be funded, but to ensure that this happens, we need your help.

To ensure that AYAC is funded appropriately and in a timely way, it is important that as, a member of AYAC, you raise the issue of the funding of a national peak body for youth affairs if you meet with Minister Ellis or participate in the consultations the Minister is holding regarding the Australian Youth Forum.

This will ensure that the Government is aware of how important the sector believes a national peak body is to ensuring that young people and those who work with them are supported in the work they do and listen to when policy is developed or reviewed.

The funding of AYAC as Australia's peak body for youth affairs is an urgent priority for young people and those who work with them. Following almost a decade without a peak body and with policies that increasingly marginalised young people in Australia, there is much work to be done.

The Rudd Government has committed to funding a peak body for youth affairs. When AYAC met with the Minister for Youth and Sport – The Hon. Kate Ellis - in early January, the Minister reaffirmed this commitment. However, before any funding is allocated, the Minister will be engaging with young people and those who work with them to hear their perspectives.

Minister Ellis will be undertaking extensive consultations on the Australian Youth Forum that was announced by the Hon. Tanya Plibersek - former Shadow Minister for Youth - at the National Youth Affairs Conference in Melbourne during May 2007.

At the time, Ms. Plibersek said:

This council will be an independent youth peak body which will bring together youth representatives and youth workers to discuss, advocate and provide feedback to the Minister for Youth and the Government about how Commonwealth policies affect young people.

AYAC wants to ensure that young people are and remain a key part of the Federal Government's agenda, provide the perspectives of young people and those who work with them to the Rudd Government and to support those who work with young people.

With your continued support by raising the issue of a national peak body for youth affairs with the Minister, AYAC will ensure young people and those who work with them have their voices heard by the Australian Government.

If you are interested in finding out more about AYAC or becoming more involved, please contact:

Luke Bo'sher, Independent Chair, by email at ayac@ayac.org.au

or Siyavash Doostkhah, member of the National Representative Council of AYAC by email at director@yanq.org.au

2006/2007 AGM & 2007/2008 Management Committee

YANQ held its Annual General Meeting on 7 December 2007 followed by the launch of YANQ's new project "From Disengaged to Reengaged – Young People's Right to Education & Training" (for further information on this project see www.yanq.org.au/reengage).

Previous Chairperson of YANQ and Director of Sisters Inside Inc, Deb Kilroy, as guest speaker, gave a brief talk on the relationship between the justice system and disengagement from education and training.

Guest speaker, Colleen Mitrow, Principal Southside Education and young people and Murri youth workers from Southside Education also gave a presentation

For the 2007/2008 year, YANQ's Management Committee is:

President: Trish Ferrier (Coordinator Deception Bay Community Youth Programs, Deception Bay)

Vice President: Adrian Hepi (Coordinator, Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program, Addiction Help Agency, Cairns)

Treasurer: Matilda Alexander (Coordinator, Prisoners' Legal Service Inc, South Brisbane)

Secretary: Adam Barnes (Youth/YACCA worker Youth & Family Services (Logan City) Inc)

Members:

Gillian Mason-Johnson (Director, Bayside Advocacy Counselling & Learning Centre, Manly)

Diane Forsyth (Director, Addiction Help Agency, Cairns)

Tanya Genito (JPET Coordinator, Deception Bay Community Youth Program)

Jarryd Williams (Director, Redcliffe Area Youth Service, Redcliffe)

Angela Barnes (Program Manager, Brisbane Youth Service, Fortitude Valley)

Anne Castles (Housing worker, Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre Inc, Camp Hill)

Barry Springett (Coordinator, LIFE for Children Program, Living in Family Environments, Anglicare CQ, Gladstone)

Tamsin McGuin (Reconnect Youth worker, Sisters Inside Inc, West End)

Regretfully, YANQ had to say goodbye to one of its long standing committee members, Phil Dodds who had to resign due to health issues. We also said goodbye to Liz Shield who has moved interstate.



Staff and students of Southside Education who gave a presentation at the launch of the Re-engage Project with YANQ staff and Deb Kilroy



Some of YANQ's Management Committee members left to right – Anne Castles, Tamsin McGuin (at back), Tanya Genito, Diane Forsyth, Trish Ferrier, Barry Springett and Adam Barnes

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc

Who are we?

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) Inc is the peak community youth affairs organisation in Queensland. Representing over 400 individuals and organisations from Queensland's youth sector, we promote the interests and well-being of young people across the state by:

- disseminating information to members, the youth sector, and the broader community
- undertaking campaigns and lobbying
- making representations to government and other influential bodies
- resourcing regional and issues-based networks
- consulting and liaising with members and the field
- linking with key state and national bodies
- initiating projects
- hosting forums and conferences.

We advocate on behalf of young people in Queensland, especially disadvantaged young people, to government and the community. We promote and support cultural diversity. We encourage the development of policies and programs responsive to the needs of young people. Your membership and support is vital in providing a voice for young people's issues in Queensland.

Who can join?

Full Membership

Membership of the network may be granted to youth organisations, Youth Workers and young people in the non-government youth sector who have agreed to support the objects and values summary of the network and paid the prescribed fee and completed the relevant application form.

Subscriber

Any other individual or organisation interested in the work of the network is entitled to become a subscriber after submitting the relevant fee.

Become a member...and make a difference!

Keep up to date

- Free newsletter quarterly, Network Noise
- Free In fact sheets distributed regularly
- Discount on other YANQ publications, such as Transitions
- Information on-line at our website
- Access to library resources
- Free-call 1-800 line for regional members.

Make valuable contacts

- Participate in youth policy development
- Join YANQ's working parties
- Receive support and information for your regional and issues-based networks
- Contribute to our newsletter.

Access professional development

- Discounts at YANQ forums and training events
- Discount at YANQ's Biennial State Youth Affairs Conference

YANQ Aims

Working together to improve the quality of life of young people in Queensland and thereby improve the quality of life of society.

YANQ Objectives

- To promote the interests of the youth sector particularly the interests of disadvantaged and marginalised young people, throughout Queensland.
- To enable the participation of young people, particularly disadvantaged and marginalised young people, in the Network and wider community.
- To advocate with and for young people, particularly disadvantaged and marginalised young people.
- To lobby to achieve long term social change in the interests of young people particularly disadvantaged and marginalised young people.
- To support and encourage the development of new means of meeting the rights and needs of young people, particularly disadvantaged and marginalised young people.
- To contribute to the development of the youth sector through networking, research and information provision.
- To develop policies on issues affecting the youth sector.
- To ensure that the Network has adequate resources to properly address issues affecting the youth sector.
- To function in a manner consistent with the Values and Vision of the Network.

Join today!

Simply fill in the application form, detach and return it to YANQ with your membership fee payment. For more information please call us on: (07) 3844 7713 or 1800 177 899 (available for regional Queensland)

Summary of our Values

At YANQ, we believe that everyone is unique. At the same time, human beings share a lot in common, and are essentially social. We envisage a society where everyone lives in harmony. For this to happen, society must both value every individual and seek the best outcome for the community as a whole. There is the same diversity amongst young people as the rest of the community; like everyone else, young people need to feel respected and valued. When young women and young men are treated as important, the rest of society will gain from their insights and experiences. We aim to contribute to developing a society that genuinely includes all its members. That's why we are committed to promoting multiculturalism (in its widest sense), and supporting and respecting the wide range of cultures that are part of Australian society. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people always have been, and always will be, the first people of this land. Because of their special relationship with the land, indigenous culture will always have a particular significance in Australian society. Focussing on reconciliation with indigenous people is an important starting point toward creating a more inclusive society. It also provides a model for other areas of action, including strategies toward improving the situation of young people.

We believe that the most effective way to achieve constructive social change is for people to work together. Economic, social and political change is happening all the time, and it is critical that we constantly assess and reassess our strategies if we are to influence change. Both the process and outcomes of change must be fair if sustained, constructive social change is to occur.

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.

We believe that a range of strategies is required to achieve constructive social change. Governments in Australia appear committed to stopping the voice of those who challenge their misplaced priorities. YANQ is responsible for being a strong public voice which lobbies and advocates on behalf of those young people who particularly miss out in society and of young people as a whole. To undertake this role effectively, it is crucial that we draw on the expertise of those working most closely with issues affecting particular groups of young people—young women and young men themselves, youth workers and youth organisations. That's why networking is another important social change strategy; it enables the youth sector to participate in collective action.

Ultimately, YANQ's credibility is maintained by practicing what we preach. Our whole structure is designed to ensure that our values and vision permeate the organisation. We are committed to maintaining an open, flexible, accountable, consistent, inclusive, valuing approach in all our dealings—within YANQ, and in our relations with our members and the wider community. We are committed to applying our values in everything we say, and everything we do.