

The Big Picture - Outcomes of Conference 'Plenary' Sessions

Conference plenary sessions were designed to achieve 3 purposes:

1. To pull together everyone's learning from the whole group sessions.
2. To build a sense of cohesion and common ground across participants.
3. To develop ideas for future action - at both a local and statewide level.

Plenary 1 - End of Day 1

This session explored the challenges and opportunities emerging from recent changes to the youth sector. Participants broke into self-selected affinity groups, including *Regional Service Providers*, *Murri's*, *Urban Fringes*, *Education* and *Juvenile Justice*. Following open discussion about the morning presentations and any relevant ideas emerging from workshops, each group was asked to identify 3 key *challenges* and 3 key *opportunities* for youth workers. These were submitted and compiled overnight.

Plenary 2 - Beginning of Day 2

This session aimed to *set the tone* for Day 2, through sharing the outcomes of Day 1 with all conference participants - including people who had missed Day 1. A verbatim transcript of *Opportunities* and *Challenges* identified, grouped according to theme, were circulated to participants. Participants self-selected into new affinity groups to discuss the findings. In particular, participants were encouraged to focus on emerging opportunities, and think more about these throughout the day in preparation for the final plenary session.

Plenary 3 - End of Day 2

This was an opportunity for participants to develop concrete strategies for future action. Everyone had the choice of joining a group to develop ideas for either:

- Local action (worker, agency or community) - discussion with an affinity group (*Murri*, *education* or *YARI-funded services*) to develop possible actions.
- Statewide action - discussion with a *random* group to develop possible strategies and document one or two favourite concrete ideas.

It was agreed that the local level ideas would be compiled for use by individual workers and agencies following the conference. Everyone had the opportunity to 'vote' for their preferred statewide strategy, and to self-nominate to become involved. (The importance of participant contribution to strategy implementation was highlighted, given that YANQ is no longer a funded organisation.)

These notes are a compilation of findings from Conference Plenary Sessions. They include:

- A verbatim transcript of the *Challenges* and *Opportunities* identified by participants.
- A themed list of *Local Action* ideas based on notes from small groups.
- The 8 *Statewide Action* strategy ideas developed - in priority order, with names of those willing to contribute to each.

Challenges for Youth Work (Small Group Notes from Plenary 1)

The following are listed in order of the number of points raised under each area of challenge:

Direct Impact on Young People (8 impacts) - empowering youth; dependency on services; restrictions and restraints (GAPS) 15 year olds; access; increased criminalisation of young people (particularly young people in care); *naming and shaming*/legislative changes; defunding of programs for offenders - prevention programs and juvenile justice conferencing; and substance misuse.

Impact on Youth Services (7 impacts) - new ways of doing business; keeping morale/motivation/positivity; uncertainty - loss of services; reduction of partnerships; diminished capacity; poverty - working in areas with less resources and structural disadvantage; stereotyping/expectations; and recognition.

Increased Government Intervention in Models of Service (5 impacts) - being *done to* by government (and having to do the *doing to*); data/outputs (e.g. 90% case management and how long to work with young people); mainstreaming - any work best of to get results; alternative education is church based/behaviour based, not academic - funded by enrolment numbers; and Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) deregulation and over-regulation - not good for *at risk* youth.

Changes in Funding Focus/Approach (3 impacts) - shift of responsibility to local government; political fringe - miss out on funding/located in centres; and competition.

Opportunities for Youth Work (Small Group Notes from Plenary 1)

The following are listed in order of the number of points raised under each area of opportunity:

Networking and Collaborations (5 opportunities) - capacity to network and partner in responsible way as local government; collaboration; collaborative work - crisis equals opportunities; networking #1; and collaborative hub management.

Improving Youth Work Practice (4 opportunities) - more creative youth work; honing skills - response to loss; innovation; and new initiatives.

For Murri Services (3 opportunities) - Culture; youth role models; and trust.

Improving Alternate Education (3 opportunities) - some good alternate education providers: Less state government involvement leads to better outcomes (e.g. Jabiru); change of government may see reinvented alternate education *Get Set for Work*; and vocational streaming in alternate education, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream; relational education; new frameworks - youth work modelling.

Community Building (3 opportunities) - to build better community responses; resilience/community spirit; and how to turn funding cuts into positives - volunteering, community support, and reciprocity.

Advocacy and Collective Action (3 opportunities) - because of current government policies - to get more people interested in bigger picture, rather than focussing on individual issues; catalyst for unification of youth sector; and sector needs to develop solidarity.

New Funding Sources (2 opportunities) - If outcomes are FOR young people, reinvestment opportunities by business investment model; and social enterprise.

Local Action Ideas (Small Group Notes from Plenary 3)

The following ideas for action at the local level (worker, agency or community) were developed by 3 affinity groups - *Murri services*, *education services* and *YARI-funded services*. (Some text has been lightly edited for clarity: verbatim transcript of findings of each group is available from YANQ.)

Interagency Links

- More communication between agencies
- Collaboration - sharing information and resources
- Links between RTO's and schools
- Consortiums/partnerships across smaller organisations
- Partnership to avoid doubling up

Marketing Successful Youth Work

- Sharing stories of success or examples of effective work
- Having 'outcomes' - evidence to show what we know works
- Telling good stories to avoid community assumption
- Creative approaches to program delivery

Valuing Young People

- Youth role models - employing young people
- Listening to what young people want
- Trust/relationships
- Making friendship

Creative Approaches to Funding

- Funding from industry for educational scholarships, targeted programs, educational support programs
- Tax the church and religious institutions
- Contract out statutory functions (e.g. outsource youth justice programs to NGO's)

Learning & Growing

- More communication within agencies
- Increase training and learning options for students and staff
- Accreditation

Whole of Community Approach

- Being aware of and utilising your community's resources - what funding is out there?
- Creating opportunities within the community

Advocacy

- Collaboration - joint advocacy
- More accountability for mainstream schools - where is the funding going?

(Murri) Culture

- Incorporate teaching culture within school
- Culture - sharing of experience and issues

... **Keep the work simple and true**

Statewide Action Strategies (Small Group Notes from Plenary 3)

The following ideas for Statewide action were developed by 6 small groups - each wrote up only their 1 or 2 *top priority* ideas, which were then *dot voted* on by all participants. (Some text has been lightly edited for clarity: a verbatim transcript of additional group ideas and comments is available from YANQ.)

1. **Empower young people to have a voice. Expand *Headspace* model to include young people and create change in programs and give a 'real' picture of what is going on (10 dots).** WILLING CONTRIBUTORS - Cass Lomas, Jared Erasmus, Lorraine Finn, Janice Mansfield, Ruth Wiseman, Amie Mackay, Pauline Tibbertsma, Liam Age.

2. **Community Education Campaign:**
 - State wide
 - 3-5 year timeframe
 - Start small - monthly campaigns
 - Concept of Ambassadors and celebrity partners
 - Engage young people
 - Partnership with other networks
 - Branding and marketing - new slogans, social media, Youtube and language.
 - Establish group to oversee campaign.(8 dots). WILLING CONTRIBUTORS - Shane A, Miranda McReynolds, Laura Howell, YAC, Elijah, Glenda (Griffith), Romii Fulton-Smith (TAFE student)

3. **Early intervention. \$ - E.Q. (Education). Flexible learning options for under 12 years. (6 dots).** WILLING CONTRIBUTORS - Pav, Craig Cranston, Shane A.

4. (The group presented this as 2 part idea. NOTE that it could be pursued separately or jointly, since different people indicated interest in each element):
 - a. **Find our spark to energise workers to want to advocate for the sector. Find real action group not *talk shit/navel-gazing* groups (4 dots).** WILLING CONTRIBUTORS -Tasha, Deb Kilroy, Whit Church, Lavinia Tyrrell.
 - b. **What would it take for young people to be heard through a mechanism like a CPLAN???** (3 dots). WILLING CONTRIBUTORS - Howard Buckley, Chelsey Hansen, Kate Tohey

5. **Partnership between Youth Workers and Schools (3 dots).** WILLING CONTRIBUTORS - Tanya, YAC, 'Supaem?'

6. **Give regional networks a strategic focus - More than information sharing; be more proactive (3 dots).** WILLING CONTRIBUTORS - Cass Lomas, Miranda McReynolds, Lorraine Finn.

7. **A unified voice for an area and for the sector (2 dots).** WILLING CONTRIBUTORS - Nil

8. **Website and social networking via YANQ sites with everyone encouraged to contribute (0 dots).** WILLING CONTRIBUTOR - YAC