Youth Sector Update

January to June 2009

Introduction

This update has two aims: to share information about emerging (and consistent) trends in the youth sector; and to share information relevant to these trends.

Every 6 months YANQ checks in with youth services around the state to see what's happening and what are the main challenges facing young people, as well as their services. This helps YANQ do its job as a Peak body in 3 important ways:

1. **keeping the community and governments informed** and up to date about where we can improve in terms of protecting and promoting young people's rights;

2. **connecting people and organisations** from different parts of the sector who might be trying to figure out how to address similar issues.

3. **spotting emerging trends and identifying areas that need more research** as well as advocating for solutions to address the challenges being raised.

Seven interagencies around the State responded to our questions, and shared their views on the challenges facing young people and youth services. Below is a summary of the issues raised with YANQ along with some articles and resources that might be relevant and which YANQ published on its website between January and June 2009. Full details of the information interagencies have shared with YANQ can be found at http://www.yanq.org.au/ycnresults.

Interagencies that Participated

The interagencies that shared their information with YANQ were as follows (postcode in brackets):

Logan Youth Network

Goodna & Ipswich Youth Interagencies

Caboolture Youth Area Network

Northern Sunshine Coast Interagency Network

Fraser Coast Youth Sector Network

Bundaberg District Youth Sector Network

Whitsunday Youth Focus

youth affairs network qld

In this Update

Challenges Facing Young People

According to the seven interagencies, the young people they support are:

Finding it difficult to find **secure, safe and stable accommodation** (4/7 interagencies mentioned this)

Struggling with **misuse and abuse of drugs and alcohol** (4/7);

Having difficulty getting support for their **mental health concerns** (3/7).

Losing connection with school (some at relatively young ages) and finding it difficult to find alternatives that work (3/7).

The following resources or information, published on YANQ's website since January 2009 are relevant to these areas.

Finding it difficult to find secure, safe and stable accommodation:

Counting the Homeless 2006

Counting the homeless 2006 includes eight state and territory reports on the homeless based on information collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Census.

Outcomes from "Think Big, Talk Loud" in Ipswich

Participants at this forum discussed the idea of an accommodation service particularly for young parents. The report on the forum's outcomes includes a little detail on this idea.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People overrepresented among Qld's homeless

This report from the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare stated nearly 27,000 people are homeless in Qld, and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders accounted for 8% of this number.

livesmart.net.au (housing advice in 6 languages)

This is a new multilingual living skills website for young people and their workers. The website provides living skills info in 6 languages (Arabic, Amharic, Dinka, Swahili, Karen and English) and features an interactive 'make your own budget' tool. The website is a resource you can use in your work with young people as they learn about **housing**, managing mobile phone bills, getting legal advice and staying happy and healthy.

Improving housing outcomes for young people leaving state out of home care

This report is the result of a project which sought to answer the question: which support model(s) most effectively facilitate positive housing outcomes for young people leaving care?

The Australian Government's White Paper on Homelessness

It seems like years ago that this report was released – but it wasn't and so this is still an up-to-date statement of how the Federal Government intends to respond to homelessness.

> ### How are Services Responding?
>
> **(or how would they like to respond if they had the resources)**
>
> "Currently refering young people to services outside the area."
>
> "… compiling data for future planning and development models"
>
> "[Would like to] Educate parents and carers of couch surfers on how best to support the young person to return home."
>
> "[Would like to see] more work programs addressing homelessness."

Misuse and abuse of drugs and alcohol

Report on Indigenous Australians in prison and the role of drugs

In this report The Australian National Council on Drugs urged federal and state governments to drastically change the way Indigenous people are treated in the criminal justice system. It argued that the system is failing to help Indigenous offenders with drug and alcohol problems and that more money should be spent on creating treatment options (rather than building prisons).

Updated alcohol resources.

In March 2009 the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) released the Australian Alcohol Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol. In response, the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) has updated its alcohol guidelines – copies can be obtained from the ADF.

> ### How are Services Responding?
>
> **(or how would they like to respond if they had the resources)**
>
> "Continuing campaign & education provided to parents."
>
> "Binge drinking being responded to by Building Safer Communities Action Team."

Media Release: Cyber-bullying Bigger Fear for Parents than Binge Drinking.

In contrast to the views of youth organisations, it seems parents may be more worried about bullying, crime and school performance. Parenting organisation Generation Next conducted a national survey of the parents of more than 500 children last month. It found that six-in-ten parents nominate bullying as their biggest concern, ahead of their children becoming a victim of crime (46 percent) or performing poorly at school (44 percent).

Management of Substance Abuse & HIV Toolkit.

The AIDS Education and Training Centre's National Resource Centre has provided a diagnostic toolkit for working with youth dealing with substance abuse and HIV. Content includes diagnostic algorithms, screening tests, behaviour change models, and additional resources.

Stepping Stones: Tool to help families cope with loved ones who use drugs.

This is a workbook and resource developed by Family Drug Support and published by the Australian Drug Foundation. It is aimed at families coping with problematic drug use by loved ones to help people turn crisis into coping.

Board game to raise awareness of link between substance abuse & mental health.

SO: Spaced Out, is a board game that aims to raise awareness about the link between substance use and mental health problems. The game was designed predominantly as a tool for workers supporting young people who are dealing with substance abuse. Its goal is to convey knowledge and generate discussion so young people can make informed choices about substance use.

New Cannabis Resources.

The National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre (NCPIC) has developed a range of useful resources on cannabis and cannabis use.

Mental Health

Mental Health Week - Short Story Competition.

For Mental Health Week this year the Mental Health Association of QLD is looking for works of short fiction that explore the "Be Active, Get Connected, Stay Involved" theme. Prizes available. Entries close September 1.

Antidepressants, placebo and medicalising mood.

In 2008 Professor Irving Kirsch and colleagues got hold of the unpublished data from drug company trials of antidepressants. According to Prof. Kirch the data showed that pharmaceutical treatments for depression do work, however "the problem is that people who are given placebo, inert sugar pills, pills with nothing in it at all, also get better."

BeyondBlue 'abandons gay youth'.

A report in the Sydney Morning Herald has published claims that Australia's national depression charity has abandoned the gay community and ignored its high rates of suicide, self-harm and mental illness.

Youth Beyond Blue site launched.

Youthbeyondblue is a new youth mental health website to help raise awareness of symptoms of depression and anxiety, and to help youth get help.

Research suggest 20 % of children who self-harm may do so again.

Irish medical researchers have found one in five children who deliberately harm themselves do so again despite medical intervention, and 10 per cent of them do so repeatedly. The study stresses parents who express concern about children self-harming are often right and need to be listened to.

How are Services Responding?

(or how would they like to respond if they had the resources)

"Need far more informal counselling services and better early detection."

"Need to increase mental health education for workers … [and] … young people."

"Need increase in counselling services."

Losing connection with school

NEYON Re-engagment Project - Under 15 years old out of school (North Brisbane).

YANQ has recently started work with the North East Youth Organisations Network (NEYON) on a project to help gauge the numbers of young people under 15 years of age who are not attending school. The project will also investigate some possible strategies to help re-engage this group.

Discrimination Against Same-Sex Attracted Youth.

In addition to the recent Open Doors Action Research Report (2008) (see here), this journal article by Mark Hohnke and Patrick O'Brien highlights the effects of homophobia in schools, and the role that the School Counsellor can play to reduce the negative outcomes.

A New Federalism in Australian Education.

This report was written by Prof. Jack Keating and published by the Education Foundation, Foundation for Young Australians. The report highlights a number of structural weaknesses in Australia's education system and proposes a path towards a cooperative rather than competitive federalist approach to schooling.

Getting Schools to Promote, not Kill Creativity?

In this video of his TED conference presentation Sir Ken Robinson makes the case for creating an education system that nurtures (rather than undermines) creativity. He challenges the way we're educating our children and champions a radical rethink of our school systems, to cultivate creativity and acknowledge multiple types.

VET learning object repository network.

LORN allows teachers and trainers to find and use online training resources from Australia's vocational education and training (VET) sector.

Edutopia Website.

What works in public education? The diverse and innovative media resources available from the US website Edutopia are designed to connect and inspire positive change in all areas of education.

Government to Guarantee Training and Education places for young Australians.

This is the text of the PM's media release announcing that every Australian under the age of 25 will have a guaranteed education or training place.

Keeping Up - supporting Indigenous young people in education, training and work.

This report contains several good practice examples of programs that are working to improve the transitions from education, training and work participation of Indigenous young people.

Challenge-based learning for young people at risk of dropping out of school.

This report, published by the New Media Consortium from the US, argues that 'challenge-based learning' is effective with 9th grade students, including those most at risk of dropping out.

Stories of early school leaving: pointers for policy and practice.

The stories of eight young people who left school early, interviewed when aged 17 for Stage 8½ of the Brotherhood of St Laurence's longitudinal Life Chances Study.

How are Services Responding?

(or how would they like to respond if they had the resources)

"Great need for literacy programs to support young people."

"Need more alternate options for education."

"[Would like school to be] more 'hands-on' and less academic - relevant."

Challenges Facing Youth Services

According to the seven interagencies, the two most common challenges youth services are struggling with:

1. **Limited (in both time and money terms) funding** that restricts their ability to meet the needs of young people they work with (6/7 interagencies raised this);

2. **Retaining staff** as well as **finding time and resources to offer professional development opportunities** (2/7);

The following resources or information, published on YANQ's website since January 2009 are relevant to these areas.

Limited funding

Cost of Service Delivery Report.

The final report on the Costs of service delivery in Disability and Community services has been released. The report is the result of research conducted by Social Policy Research Centre, Disability Studies and Research Centre (University of New South Wales) and Griffith University.

YANQ's Guide to the 2009/10 State Budget.

In response to the recent State Budget 2009/10, YANQ has highlighted a few key areas for comment. We acknowledge that not everyone can win when it comes to State funding, but there are some areas of particular concern to us. Additionally, we have commented on the new funding for increased wages in the community sector, and where this funding will be directed.

Retaining Staff & Professional Development Opportunities

Youth Sector Workforce Skills & Training Project.

This new project of YANQ's will examine the current state of affairs in the youth sector - who is the sector, what skills currently exist, what skills will be critical to meet future needs? It will inform how the sector can prepare for the future through **attracting, retaining, developing and training a skilled workforce.** The key outcome of this project will be a Position Paper and Youth Sector Development Plan. The paper will contain recommendations and be used to inform skilling and workforce development initiatives.

Australian Services Union - Update on Pay Equity and Funding for Wage Increases.

On the 9th of July the Australia Services Union released an update on the Pay Equity Decision and the funding announced in the State Government's June budget. The update answers these questions: "What are the pay increases? Who does the increase apply to? Where is the funding for the increase? Who gets the funding? What are the Union's plans? What should you do?"

New Funding for Wage Increases. Who is affected?

This is YANQ's initial analysis of what the new Award, the new pay rates and the State Government's announcement of funding to increase wages meant for youth services. It presents similar information to the Union's update above.

What's Next?

YANQ uses the information interagencies share with us to keep the community and governments informed about challenges facing young people and youth services. We provide this information to governments in the form of regular briefings. The information is provided to the community through our website, newsletters and occasional forums.

This is also an opportunity for services to connect with others dealing with similar issues. Any worker or service that would like to contact the interagencies that raised this issue can do so by contacting YANQ's Network Development Officer – phone 3844 7713 or email ndo@yanq.org.au. Contact details for interagencies can also be found on YANQ's website at www.yanq.org.au/networks.