

YAPRap

Newsletter of the Youth Action and Policy Association NSW Inc

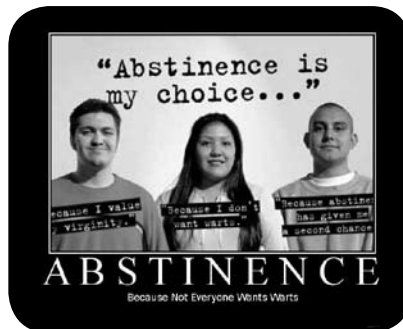
Vol 17 No 6 June 2007

Abstinence-only sex ed programs a waste of money

It has taken a US government report to confirm what experts in sexual behaviour have repeatedly warned about in recent years regarding teenage sex ... abstinence just doesn't work.

Sexual education programs which advocate teaching children to avoid sex until marriage have been found to be a failure.

Researchers found that teenagers who took part in the programs as elementary and middle school students were just as likely to have sex as those who did not take part



in them.

The report by researchers from Mathematica Policy Research Inc. which was requisitioned by Congress, was released by California Democrat Henry Waxman's office and is available online.

Abstinence-only education programs are strongly supported by the administration of President George W. Bush and the report has re-ignited the debate on the government's attitude towards birth control.

The research by Christopher Trenholm and colleagues examined four abstinence programs throughout the US. They interviewed teenagers with an average age of 16 living in rural and urban communities in Florida, Wisconsin, Mississippi and Virginia.

In total 2,057 children were
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YAPRap

YAPRap is YAPA's monthly newsletter. YAPA is the Youth Action and Policy Association NSW Inc, the peak organisation representing young people and youth services in NSW.

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YAPRap is sent to members and subscribers only. Go to www.yapa.org.au or contact us for details.

Contributions

Contributions welcome from young people, youth workers and others. Email articles and listings to info@yapa.org.au or ring Nick Manning at YAPA to discuss your contribution. YAPA may also publish your contribution in other newsletters and on our website.

Advertisements and loose inserts

We run ads in YAPRap and insert loose flyers, when space permits. Contact Nick Manning to discuss your ad or flyer.

Deadlines for contributions, ads and loose inserts

(YAPRap is posted 2 weeks after the deadline.)

Monday 16 July
Monday 20 August

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Abstinence-only sex ed programs a waste of money

(continued from previous page)

interviewed of which 1,200 of them had taken part in abstinence-only education programs four to six years earlier.

According to the report, the average teenager experiences sexual intercourse at 14.9 years and teenagers in both groups were just as likely to use condoms or birth control.

The report does in this respect counter criticism that abstinence-only education leave children ignorant of how to protect themselves from pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and therefore have more unprotected sex.

It was found that 23% of both groups reported having had sex and always using a condom; 17% of both groups reported having had sex and only sometimes using a condom; and 4% of both groups reported having had sex and never using a condom.

The researchers say that the two groups also did not differ in the number of partners with whom they had sex, and around 25 percent in both groups had already had sex with three or more partners.

Senator Waxman, chairman of the House of Representatives Government Oversight Committee, says the data demonstrates that abstinence-only programs do not

protect teenagers health and are a waste of American taxpayers money.

Apparently the federal government spends some \$176 million annually on abstinence-only education programs but the report has found that children need more comprehensive education regarding abstinence,

contraception and sex in general.

Experts agree and say the vast majority of the public does not see abstinence and contraception as an either/or proposition and want teenagers to be informed

of both.

Others say the abstinence-only advocates have been promoting ignorance in an era where AIDS presents a major threat and that represents bad ethics as well as bad public health policy.

The United States has one of the highest rates of unwanted teenage pregnancies in the western world and many believe the \$176 million could be better used in sponsoring comprehensive sex education which would include abstinence.

Meanwhile advocates for abstinence-only education, along with the Bush administration, suggest more such education is needed.

[www.news.medical.net 16 April 2007]



Young Australians healthy but still taking risks

Dr Indrani Pieris-Caldwell, Australian Institute of Health
and Welfare

Young Australians are generally healthy and well, with over 90% rating their health as excellent, very good or good, according to *Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2007*, a new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report goes beyond traditional measures of health to include community and family, education and employment, socio-economic status, social support and environmental factors.

Some of the best news out of the report is that death rates among young people have halved over the last two decades.

This decrease is largely due to decreases in injury deaths, mainly from transport accidents and suicide, which have decreased by 35% and 40% respectively.

Significant improvements have been seen in other areas too. Asthma prevalence has declined from 16% to 13% between 2001 and 2004 05, and melanoma incidence

among young people has declined by 14% for females and 23% for males.

Similar improvements have also been observed in a number of communicable diseases such as measles, rubella, Hepatitis A and B, and meningococcal disease.


However, hospitalisation rates for some chronic conditions, such as diabetes and Crohn's disease are on the rise.

With respect to education, most Year 7 students met the national benchmarks for reading, writing and numeracy. The proportion of high school students staying on at school until the end of year 12 has more than doubled since 1980. The proportion of young Australians with post school qualifications is also on the rise.

While the majority of young people live with their parents, almost one in three were living away from home. The most frequent living arrangements were as a married or de-facto couple, in a group household or with other related individuals (not their parents). A small proportion were living alone or were single parents.

While significant health gains have been made, the report does highlight areas where further health improvements need to be made, including reducing obesity among young people and increasing their daily fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity levels.

These issues are particularly critical for young Indigenous people, who have higher rates of death, injury, obesity and some chronic diseases, than other young Australians.

Nearly a quarter of all young Australians reported having used an illicit drug and almost one-third drink alcohol at levels that put them at risk of short-term harm. Teenage mothers were much more likely to report smoking during pregnancy (42% compared with 17% for all women). 

More information

Young Australians: their health
and wellbeing 2007
[www.aihw.gov.au/publications/
index.cfm/title/10451](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10451)



Goodcopbadcop - police, transits & security guards



goodcopbadcop lets young people tell YAPA (and the world) your experiences (good and bad) with:

- NSW Police
- Rail Transit Officers
- private security guards.

Youth workers: You can submit the experiences of young people you work with.

www.justiceyouth.blogspot.com and click on goodcopbadcop. Here's a taste:

annoyed said...

I am a 22 year old female and was travelling home from my university

in the city at night. I had a weekly student ticket from Merrylands to the City. I don't often purchase a weekly ticket but I was completing a summer school elective at uni that ran for a week and so it was the most practical choice.

I was expecting a lift home from Merrylands but received a phone call en route that I was to meet my parents at Liverpool. They generally pick me up on nights as it is too dangerous to walk to a car etc from the station and they were not able to get to Merrylands in time which means I'd have to wait around alone.

I decided to stay on the train even though my ticket did not go to Liverpool as I did not feel safe getting off the train to buy a

ticket and wait at a smaller isolated station until another train came. I considered that the difference between the two weekly tickets is \$1.60 which works out to 20-odd cents per day.

When I arrived at Liverpool I was immediately accosted by transit officers. I was not intentionally trying to evade the ticket system for personal gain and asked first whether it might be possible for me to purchase a ticket for the distance between Merrylands and Liverpool. He refused. I explained my situation and my reluctance in getting off the train. The transit officer was intimidating and rude and said that it was the 'principle' that I should receive the fine and that I made a 'conscious decision'

goodcopbadcop goes blog & becomes Youth Justice!

goodcopbadcop, a project of YAPA and the NSW Youth Justice Coalition (YJC), an unfunded network of youth workers, lawyers, academics and policy workers, has now been revamped into Youth Justice, a blog, to continue to advocate systemically for the rights of young people.

The blog is now an even simpler way for young people and youth workers to tell their stories on these issues. It not only houses

goodcopbadcop, but it is also an excellent opportunity to have an input into other youth justice initiatives, such as youth justice conferencing, the youth drug and alcohol court, and the controversial anti-social behaviour orders.

YAPA and YJC use young people's stories and other comments in their ongoing policy input to NSW Government agencies such as the Ombudsman, Police, Department of Transport and the Attorney

General's Department.

We will regularly publish comments from the blog in YAPRap as well as highlight new initiatives in youth justice.

Whether it's to do with police, transit officers or youth justice conferences, if you prefer, send your comment to policy@yapa.org.au or ring John Ferguson ext. 5, (02) 9319 1100 (or NSW landlines only 1800 627 323).



not to get off the train.

I am full aware that there are consequences for over-riding a journey. I am, after all, a law student. But I really believe that in this situation he was unreasonable. The reason I believe he acted discriminatorily towards me was when he demanded to know 'how old I was' and suggested that since I go to uni I should be smart enough to know. I was polite, well-dressed and carrying my uni books. He insisted that I must do this all the

time but when I said I was law-abiding in all respects, he told me he can't make any judgments. Why then make judgments on the fact that I am young and a student? I was fined \$200. He was a complete bully and spoke down on me as you would to a young child. He was trained to power-play the situation.

The fact that these guys are here to protect safety is the most ludicrous thing. I did not observe one transit officer on my train

home to protect my safety. There were however six standing around the ticket gates at Liverpool station waiting to issue fines. In this circumstance I think a warning would suffice. I would not (and have never) over-travelled my journey to save a couple of cents. But if they are not doing their job (to protect people by ensuring safety on trains) it is a joke that I have to pay \$200 in order to protect my own safety on the train. 🐾

Youth work ethics

June dilemma: Come and work for me?

You are on 12 months parental leave and have several jobs around the home that could be done by a young person such as weeding, babysitting and housework. There were several young people from the program that you previously ran (who will not be clients when you return to work), who are desperate to get their first job (and the good reference that would hopefully come with it).

You want to offer one or more of these young people a few hours work on a regular basis over a few months, just to help you get on top of things at home.

What do you do?

Read what other youth workers have to say about this dilemma, and add your own comment, at:

<http://youthworkethics.blogspot.com> and click on the heading: June 07 dilemma: Come and work for me?

There will be a new dilemma in July YAPRap and every 2 months after that.

Calling all team meetings!

Some youth work teams are debating YAPA ethical dilemmas at team meetings. If your team does this, help others by posting a short summary of your conclusions on the blog, for others to read.

In a dilemma yourself???

Suggest an ethical dilemma for YAPA to publish. It could be a situation you are facing or have faced in the past, or just something you have wondered about.

Simply email info@yapa.org.au with the subject: ETHICAL DILEMMA. Give plenty of detail about the context. You don't have to identify yourself or your agency, and in any case we will not identify you publicly. 🐾



Enrolling young people to vote

Labor supports campaign to get youth on electoral roll

Tanya Plibersek MP, Shadow Minister for Human Services, Housing, Women and Youth

Labor commends the Australian Electoral Commission's Enrol to Vote Week campaign which starts today.

Getting young people on the roll is more crucial since the introduction of John Howard's new electoral laws which will restrict thousands of young Australians from having their say.

In the past, new enrollees and re-enrolees, many who had just turned 18, had seven days once the

election was called to enrol. They now may have only a day.

If these laws applied in 2004, up to 160,000 people would have missed out on voting.

Figures released last week show that the AEC's electoral roll target is down by about 150,000 people.

The Electoral Commissioner, Ian Campbell, said in April this year that only "around half of Australia's 18 year-olds are currently on the electoral roll".

Federal Labor will repeal John

Howard's unfair Electoral laws.

We will also restore the position of Youth Minister and fund the Australian Youth Forum which will be an independent, youth representative body which will take seriously the views and interests of youth in policy.

The Australian Youth Forum will be a formal communication channel between outstanding youth representatives, youth organisations and the Federal Government.

[Media release 28 May 2007]



The Greens want all young people to have a say

Senator Kerry Nettle

Recent changes to Australia's voting system means that disadvantaged young people could miss out on having their say in the upcoming Federal election.

The laws about enrolling to vote have changed. When the next election is called, there will only be a few hours to enrol, instead of several days. Half of young people are not on the roll, even though they are able to from 17.

In the seven days before the close of rolls before the last election, 423,000 people enrolled for the first time or changed their



details—79,000 of them were first time voters, many of whom would have been young people.

The Australian Electoral Commission is running a comprehensive enrol to vote campaign across educational institutions, particularly schools. Unions are also talking with young people at TAFE and universities.

The Greens are concerned that young people who are not engaged in education will remain unaware of these changes and miss out on their right to have their say about who governs Australia.


So The Greens will be getting the new enrol to vote forms out to youth and community centres across the state to ensure that all young people get the opportunity to vote in this upcoming Federal election.

Another change to the law is to introduce a more stringent identity check, including witnessing of ID by selected people. For vulnerable young people, this may be difficult. However, managers of community centres and refuges are able to witness IDs.

There is a practical alternative

for youth services who work with young people who don't have ID, or if a manager is not available to witness their ID. Two people who are already on the electoral roll, and who have known the young person for at least a month, can confirm their identity by signing their enrolment form. These two people could be staff, volunteers and/or other young people, as long as they are already on the roll.

With big issues such as industrial relations and how Australia responds to climate change, on the election agenda, it is young people who will have to live with the legacy of decisions that are made now. This is why it is so important for them to be able to have a say in our political process.

The Greens are worried that with so much focus on who will be the next Prime Minister we may end up with John Howard still controlling the Senate after the next election and that this would see the Senate block any progressive changes about making our workplaces fairer or seriously tackling climate change. 

More information

Australian Electoral Commission

- Check your enrolment status: www.aec.gov.au or 13 23 26
- Enrolment forms: www.aec.gov.au or any Australia Post outlet
- Enrol to Vote Week: enrolment forms, educational resources, promotional materials, e-newsletters: www.enroltovoteweek.com.au

“Don't be silenced” poster

Youth Justice Coalition
www.yapa.org.au/enrol.pdf
(265KB PDF)

Bulk enrolment forms for youth services

If you have not yet received forms from NSW Greens, get in touch with El Gibbs on 02 9519 0877 or el@nsw.greens.org.au


NSW Youth Advisory Council

The New South Wales Youth Advisory Council (YAC) was established in 1989 under the Youth Advisory Council Act, to ensure that young people participate in the development of Government policies and programs which concern them. The Youth Advisory Council advises the NSW Government on:

- Issues of concern to young people (aged 12-25) in NSW
- Government policies relating to young people

• Youth-related programs.
Twelve YAC members were appointed by the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Linda Burney MP, in April:

- Michael Yuen (Chair), 20 - Parramatta
- Suraya Turk (Deputy Chair), 21 - Roselands
- Jenna Davis, 20 - Belmont
- Samantha Dawson, 19 - Penrith
- Martin Drennan, 20 - Bronte
- Rebecca Fowles, 23 - Weston

- Stacey Kelly-Greenup, 22 - West Kempsey
 - Casey Lovelock, 21 - Berkeley Vale
 - Tim Quadrio, 20 - Eastwood
 - Amanda Scott, 20 - Windang
 - Melissa Smith, 17 - Forbes
 - Mohammed Zaoud, 19 - Auburn
- YAPA congratulates Rebecca, who is a YAPA member, and all the other YAC members on their appointment. 



Student support remains under the poverty line

Luke Bo'sher, Policy Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT

The Youth Coalition of the ACT is expressing its deep disappointment that many students will remain living under the poverty line in spite of the current economic prosperity.

maximum of \$226 per week. This will remain a significant issue for hundreds of thousands of young people across Australia.

Many young people receiving Centrelink payments are barely able to cover their food and accommodation expenses out

Students are working more and more to support themselves because this Government will not give them adequate support. If this Government is serious about improving the quality of education in Australia, it must ensure that students are supported to learn.


“Many young people receiving Centrelink payments are barely able to cover their food and accommodation expenses out of the \$226 a week Centrelink provides, let alone the cost of textbooks, transport, clothing and other essentials.”

While the Federal Budget has announced an extension of payments to Masters students, it has not increased the level of payment. This will result in more students being eligible for an allowance that remains below the poverty line. It does not address the inadequate nature of student income support.

Centrelink payments for students will continue to be below the poverty line and inadequate for students' basic needs. This budget has not delivered any changes to the level of Youth Allowance currently set at a

of the \$226 a week Centrelink provides, let alone the cost of textbooks, transport, clothing and other essentials.

The Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee has found that 16% more of undergraduate students' income (65.9% of all income) is from paid work in 2006 than in 2000 and that 40% of students reported that their employment adversely affected their studies. The report also found that the average income received by students from Centrelink payments fell from \$2456 in 2000 to \$2170 in 2006.

While it is encouraging to see the Government recognizing the importance of Master's level study, students would not be mistaken in asking how beneficial it will be to receive a payment that is far below the poverty line. 



Federal Budget for young people

In last month's YAPRap we listed many of the items in the latest Federal Budget which will affect young people. To give a range of perspectives, here are some of the media reports on youth-related items.

To read the whole article, go to www.yapa.org.au and scroll down to Youth News – Federal Budget, and click the links.

Young to be warned about the hidden costs of parenthood

Concern that teenage girls are getting pregnant in order to secure the baby bonus has prompted the Federal Government to spread the word about the real costs of children.

Children will have say over custody

Children living in regional areas will be more able to have their views on their parents' separations taken into account when courts are making custody decisions.

Cash in the tool bag for young workers

Apprentices in skill-shortage trades will be given a tax-free bonus of \$1000 a year for the first two years to top up their wages.

Academic incentives aim to increase Aboriginal opportunities

Noel Pearson's influence on this Government's indigenous policy shone through its budget announcements aimed at boosting education achievement.


Universities enrolment bonanza

The Federal Government has launched a counter-attack to Labor's "education revolution", boosting funding to universities and giving them greater flexibility to enrol extra students.

Private schools set to gain more of the pie

Funding for private schools will increase by \$1.7 billion over the next five years to \$7.5 billion while Federal Government contributions for the nation's public schools will rise by \$300 million to \$3.4 billion in the same period.

Govt has neglected public education: AEU

Parents of public school students will see the budget as more proof of the federal government's lack of concern for public education, the Australian Education Union (AEU) says. 



Young workers – new guidelines

John Della Bosca, NSW Minister for Industrial Relations

The NSW Industrial Relations Commission will deliver new guidelines for employers today (22 May) to ensure young people are protected from the unfair Work Choices laws.

The guidelines will apply to young worker protections put into law by the lemma Government under its new Industrial Relations (Child Employment) Act 2006 and give employers clear guidance about their legal responsibilities.

These laws ensure people under 18 years of age, regardless of the work contract they are on, receive wages and conditions that at least match the relevant State award and are protected from unfair dismissal.

The lemma government's view is clear: there can be no compensation for poor working conditions which compromise a young worker's safety or their future success.

Paying young people in pizzas for a fair day's work is completely unacceptable.

Due to their inexperience, young people are particularly vulnerable to being pressured into signing AWAs that strip away workplace conditions.

Leaked figures from the Commonwealth's own Office of Employment Advocate on AWAs reveal:

- 75% cut shift work loadings
- 68% exclude penalty rates

• 52% exclude public holiday pay. Also, under Section 194 of Work Choices, there is no requirement for a minimum rate of pay for junior employees.

And the Commonwealth's Office of the Employment Advocate's own website has featured lodged work contracts which set the hourly rate of pay for casual employees working on Sundays at 40 per cent less than the NSW award.

In NSW, there are more than 150,000 people under 18 years of age in formal employment and many of those have been forced into Mr Howard's Work Choices system.

Now, with the implementation of this legislation and guidelines, all young workers, no matter what industrial relations system they belong to, will be given a fair go.

This is more than is available to them under Work Choices – even with the so-called 'fairness test' – as it still allows basic workplace rights and entitlements to be ripped away.

The 'fairness test' is a shameless scam that will do nothing to protect families from being exploited. It is not backed up by any additional funding for enforcement.

The Work Choices system still lacks an independent umpire that could provide inexpensive and fast workplace justice when disputes and disagreements arose.

And there remains no independent umpire to enforce a no disadvantage test.

Families seeking justice will still have to resort to costly court actions that most workers simply cannot afford.

Under Work Choices, the potential for exploitation of young workers is still enormous and the lemma Government is determined to provide them with real protections.

Young people are our future and they deserve our encouragement. They are not in the workplace to be exploited, used and abused.

[Media release 22 May 2007]



More information

These articles are linked under Youth News at www.yapa.org.au:

- Fed govt, employers attack IRC finding: Federal government & employers attack new guidelines which they say will create confusion for more than 150,000 young NSW workers and their bosses smh.com.au 22/5/07
- Bosses decry child labour law smh.com.au 24/5/07
- Thousands stranded on AWAs: Thousands of teenagers have signed agreements that take away overtime pay, public holidays and paid break times without offering any compensation. smh.com.au 5/5/07



Changing old approaches for younger workers

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People recently tabled a special report containing 19 key recommendations that would help to improve the experiences of children and young people who work.

The Kids at Work Recommendations report is based on advice received from a Taskforce set up to look at what is being done, or could be done, to support children's workplace experiences and job satisfaction as well as ways to improve access to employment for children who have more difficulty in finding jobs.

The Task Force was established in response to a range of issues that came out of groundbreaking research conducted by the Commission on 11,000 children and young people aged between 12 and 16 and their working experiences. The research was the first of its kind to explore young people's work participation in Australia and to examine the impact on their well-being.

"The Kids at Work research gave us a unique picture of a major aspect of children's lives that we didn't have before," said the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Ms Gillian Calvert.

"This new report is helping to

build on that information and provides the community with new ways to improve the working experience of kids in NSW.

"Government, employers, non government organisations, schools, communities, unions, children and their families all have contributions to make in this process."

Workplace health and safety laws are one of the main targets in the recommendations it was estimated that four in 10 employees aged 16 or under had been injured at work.

"It's an alert to employers that children and young people may be different to adults and when they're looking at occupational health and safety they have to have policies that reflect that," she said.

"Specific consideration should be given in law to the health and safety of workers under 18 and the skills that employers need to manage child employees," said Ms Calvert.

The deputy chairwoman of the taskforce Ms Anna Booth, said employers are being asked to understand the 'mindset' of children and their stage of development.

"We know that kids get a lot of benefit from their work so we don't want to create an environment where it's all too hard for them to work," Ms Booth said.

"But you can't assume that a young worker aged 12 or 13 years

is going to have the same reaction to a situation and be able to make the same quick decision as an adult worker."

The Kids at Work Recommendations report is encouraging WorkCover to target the safety of industries employing large numbers of young people, including retail, fast food, construction, agriculture, hairdressing and hospitality.

Other recommendations included expanding a Government pilot project aimed at stopping "sport rage" towards young referees who were marked out as rookies by wearing coloured vests, and producing a guide for babysitters after one in five surveyed listed this as their job. Advice to be included in the guide would be such things as the importance of having emergency phone numbers and knowing what to do if the baby doesn't settle.

[Reproduced with permission from issue 28 of exchange, newsletter of the NSW Commission for Children and Young People]



More information

**The full report:
Children at Work
Recommendations**

[www.kids.nsw.gov.au/uploads/
documents/childwork_
taskforce_rec.pdf](http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/uploads/documents/childwork_taskforce_rec.pdf)



Is there a children's policy?

NSW Commission for Children and Young People

The recent debates, public discussion and media coverage about P plate drivers and young driver deaths has been closely followed by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People.

Not only because transport

drivers. But we need to do this in a well thought out and informed way if our community is to benefit.

While 'reports' about 'dangerous young P plate drivers' stir the reader, they are not always accurate with data often selectively used to support a 'campaign' for a particular solution.

In relation to children and young

with highly charged feelings, sensational reporting and popular concern.

A better starting point

The trend in motor vehicle deaths of young people is downwards and has been for some time. Additionally,

“It's hard to reconcile evidence-based, long-term, effective policies with highly charged feelings, sensational reporting and popular concern.”

is an important issue for young people but also because it can tell us about the way policy debates about children and young people sometimes take place and how decisions are made about important issues that affect their lives.

By reflecting on the 'P plate' issue as an example, we hope to learn how to better develop future policy to improve outcomes for children and young people across a range of issues, including young drivers.

The debate

Any death of a young driver is tragic. As a society, we should be taking steps to reduce death and injury to, and caused by, young

people, it is not uncommon for a solution to involve an "information strategy" or an "education campaign" for kids, even when research has demonstrated that such an approach will not work.

The debate was also complicated by many people not being aware of the significant changes to licensing over the recent years.

Stereotyping with anecdotes about single instances was also often used as 'evidence' of typical situations. This conveyed the message that "young drivers", "inexperienced drivers" and "p platers" meant the same thing when they don't.

It's hard to reconcile evidence-based, long-term, effective policies

the number of fatalities where the driver was under 25 years was slightly lower in 2006 than in previous years. Also, we know that when children and young people die in car accidents, the drivers are usually fully licensed drivers, not P platers.

On reflection, "How can we regulate young P platers so they don't kill themselves and each other?" may not be the question that needs answering. Perhaps the better question to answer is "How can we reduce the number of young people being killed in car accidents, irrespective of the status of the driver's license?"

In developing effective policy it's essential to identify the right issue



and then get the question right. By asking the wrong question, we may impose a wrong solution on the community.

A better result

In developing effective solutions, the frequent call is for changes to a “service” or a law. While good responses can sometimes be about establishing or expanding a service or changing a law, other options can sometimes be more effective.

For instance, redesigning parks or providing street lighting, changing the packaging on a product or the way it is advertised, setting a new fee scale, or professionals being less formal are all examples of other options.

Communities benefit when they are made aware of – and are open to – the full range of possible approaches and initiatives that may work, rather than being focussed

and their families. For example, concerns have subsequently been raised for young women’s safety getting home from work, sporting or social events if they are unable to share the travel and there is limited public transport available.

Further, debates about children and young people can sometimes focus solely on the issue of protecting kids, as if that concern automatically outweighs all others. While for very young children, security is a most important concern, many adolescents report feeling stifled by society’s concern for protecting them.

Young people and older children are aware of the full range of their needs; they want to have a degree of control over their lives and to live according to the need to balance safety concerns against living a full and interesting life.

the developing child in ways that are longer lasting (after all they generally have longer to live than adults do) and that are potentially more serious (because they are still developing).

Furthermore, what happens in one part of a developing child’s life affects other parts of their development. Artificially compartmentalising children’s lives and considering solutions without understanding the full context of children’s lives could have unanticipated consequences.

Children draw out our emotions and this is particularly so when a child or young person has been harmed. Debates become emotional and can draw people together in search of a quick solution. Where the developing child is concerned, it is therefore all the more important that policy solutions are well thought out and

Artificially compartmentalising children’s lives and considering solutions without understanding the full context of children’s lives could have unanticipated consequences.

on laws and services as the only options available.

Sometimes a debate can become so focussed that participants forget that children, young people and their families have lives which extend beyond the issue under discussion. Families live holistic lives, not lives that come in separate independent chunks. A response to one issue in kids’ lives will probably impact on many parts of their lives and those of their families and in their communities.

The P plate debate quickly became so tightly focussed on regulating provisional licences that it lost sight of the harm some of its suggestions might cause to other aspects of young people’s lives

A Children’s Policy Framework?

Children and young people deserve well-researched and considered policy responses informed by expert knowledge and where they have been included in the debate.

We need to understand that the physical, social, cognitive and emotional development that children and young people are experiencing means children’s policy may impact differently from adults.

Getting the policy question and solution wrong can impact on

based on evidence.

The Commission has begun to explore this question of whether there is a children’s policy framework that accounts for the uniqueness of the developing child as well as their membership of the wider polity. Over the next few months we’ll be drawing on our experiences and what we understand about children’s wellbeing to develop a children’s policy framework. We see this as another step we can take in improving policy development and policy outcomes for children, young people, their families and communities.

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Anger management & young people

A practice-based research project

Suzanne Egan, Research Officer, Rosemount

The impetus for this research was the experiences and observations of the counsellors in Rosemount's Adolescent and Family Counselling Program:

1. Firstly there had been a marked increase in referrals for anger issues.
2. Secondly the counsellors experienced difficulty engaging a significant proportion of the young people in traditional counselling and considered a targeted group work program may be more effective.
3. Thirdly, there appeared to be a lack of clarity in how the term anger management was being used with the result that young people were referred for 'anger management issues' for a diverse range of issues that did not always prove consistent with anger difficulties.
4. Finally there was concern that, in a social and political climate where young people are often portrayed as dangerous and out of control, 'anger management' not be used to silence or disempower young people.

Therefore, the importance of approaching the issue from a social justice perspective was emphasised from the outset.

Rosemount

Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service is located in Marrickville an inner-western suburb of Sydney. The service has two main streams of service provision:

1. educational programs for young people experiencing difficulty in the mainstream education system
2. counselling programs (both generalist and sexual assault) for young people and their families.

In addition, Rosemount employs a research officer, whose role is to conduct practice-based research on issues identified within the agency.

Research aims & methodology

1. to examine the existing research on the effectiveness of anger management programs
2. to analyse how the issue of anger management has been problematised within the literature
3. to extend on the existing body of knowledge by drawing on the experience of both local practitioners and young people themselves.

A series of focus groups were

conducted with practitioners employed in a variety of settings that brought them into contact with young people experiencing anger difficulties. Focus groups were also run with young people participating in Rosemount's educational programs. In addition, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to a broader range of agencies and completed by both staff and young people using the services.

What is anger management?

Anger management generally targets externalised, as opposed to internalised, expressions of anger. That is, anger which is overt, disruptive, and noticeable to others. The purpose of standard anger management programs is for clients to react to life with minimal and appropriately expressed anger. Most programs use a group work model and employ a cognitive behavioural approach. This approach typically involves participants learning to: recognise trigger situations, change accompanying thought patterns and practise physical relaxation skills. These new responses are then rehearsed using role-plays, until they become automatic.

How effective are anger management programs?

The increasing popularity of anger management programs has led to



a number of systematic reviews of research on the outcomes of these interventions. Overall, these reviews have found anger programs to be effective. For example, they have similar success rates as for other issues, such as anxiety and depression, where cognitive behavioural interventions are commonly used. It is important to note though, that interventions were most successful where adolescents had moderate levels of anger, as opposed to those with either very mild anger difficulties or a history of violent behaviour. However, one of the major limitations of these reviews is that they examine studies that have taken place under well-controlled research conditions. 'Ecological validity', or the extent to which these findings can be transferred to community settings, has yet to be established and indeed remains an acknowledged goal of outcome research.

The view from the literature: anger management as an individual problem

The barriers to successfully transferring research into practice are often framed in quite individualised terms... For example, the perceived motivational problems of people with anger management difficulties are widely discussed in considerable detail. There is little in the standard anger management literature that considers systemic and environmental issues or that considers anger as a legitimate response to injustice. However, what is considered a valid or invalid expression of anger does not exist in a social vacuum but is closely linked to issues of power and control. That is anger (overtly expressed anger) is more readily accepted if one is perceived to be of high rather than low status. Given that social welfare agencies such as Rosemount provide services to many

marginalised young people these are crucial factors to consider. Finally, the dominance of quantitative research frameworks has meant there is little research to date which gives voice to the knowledge and experiences either of youth work practitioners or of young people themselves.

The view from the field: anger management as a social issue

Largely both practitioners' and young people's understandings of the term anger management and their expectations of program outcomes conformed to the literature. However, there were some wide-reaching criticisms made of the concept of anger management. These included the focus on a specific expression of anger (externalised), the neglect of difficulties with internalised anger and the targeting of 'problem' young people as opposed to universal program provision. Some practitioners raised issues about the individualised nature of anger management programs and the potential for broader social issues to be ignored or mislabelled. An example was given of a child, who subjected to racism from peers, was referred for 'anger management' on the basis of their response to this discriminatory treatment. Referral patterns reflected those observed by Rosemount staff and ranged from minor issues such as swearing through to cases of physical assault.

Both practitioners and young people identified environment influences as key factors for young people experiencing difficulties with anger. These included school environments, the proliferation of violent films and the effects of different forms of child abuse, for example living with domestic violence. Perhaps not surprisingly, practitioners highlighted

the need for programs which adopt a systemic approach and include young people's families, schools and service providers where relevant. Young people's comments focused on the importance of skill-based approaches ('doing' not 'just talking'), grounded in their context of their day-to-day experiences. Interestingly this view supports the research literature, which found skills-based rather than educative models to be most effective for adolescents.

Confusing anger with violence

There appears to be a slippage occurring, in both the literature and the field, between the terms anger and violence. For example, some young people saw problems with anger as being the result of exposure to violent films, while practitioners focused on anger management difficulties as an outcome, or effect, of different forms of child abuse such as living with domestic violence. Yet these factors are generally posed as risk factors for the development of violent behaviour. Similarly, the research papers often introduce their anger management findings via at times quite apocalyptic descriptions of escalating descriptions of youth crime and violence. The point is made not to refute a relationship between anger and (some) violence, but to question the implication that violence is anger and that, by implication, anger management programs provide a solution to issues of violence. Equally concerning is the assumption, that youth crime and violence is escalating, as there is little Australian evidence to support this claim.

Implications

The complex social and political issues surrounding 'anger management' and young people require ongoing


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Anger management & young people

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discussion, analysis, and research. The youth service sector, with its strong tradition of advocating for the rights and needs of young people, is in a prime position to ensure this occurs. Services within the sector are also ideally located to ensure the implementation of sound and effective programs to assist young people experiencing anger difficulties. The

current research findings suggest that key to this are skills-based programs clearly linked to the everyday realities of young people's lives, coupled with a systemic approach that moves beyond the individual as the focus of intervention. Finally, consideration needs to be given to either adapting or developing programs to include difficulties with internalised anger. 

More information

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Rosemount Good Shepherd
Youth and Family Service
rosemountresearch@bigpond.com
(02) 9560 4588

Youth news

...for those in a hurry...

To read the whole article, go to www.yapa.org.au, scroll down to Youth News, and click away.

Pollies chase the youth vote on MySpace

MySpace Australia has enlisted Federal Government ministers and shadow ministers to create MySpace profiles before the election...

Jail threat to students

Students aged 10 and over will be warned that phone cameras, text messages and toy guns turn them into potential criminals...

Students have role in fight for fairer education

Later this year 600,000 students will vote at the federal election, many for the first time. While higher education appears to have become a significant battleground between

Labor and the Coalition, neither has won the large and potentially influential student vote...

MySpace calls for Australian sex-offender database

MySpace wants our authorities to let it share information about sex offenders using the site...

He's on a musical mission for God

There is nothing nerdy about the tousled blond frontman of Hillsong United, the rock band of the youth ministry for Sydney's Pentecostal Hillsong Church...

Rich teens prone to problem gambling

A disturbing number of teenagers in Sydney's affluent suburbs are problem gamblers on their way to serious addictions...

Work Choices

- Federal government & employers attack new guidelines which they

say will create confusion for more than 150,000 young NSW workers and their bosses...

- Bosses decry child labour law...
- Thousands of teenagers have signed agreements that take away overtime pay, public holidays and paid break times without offering any compensation...

Education

- Australian unis applaud Google's decision to ban advertisers spruiking essay-writing services for lazy students...
- Digi-kids and a new way of learning: An education revolution that all sides of politics have failed to address...
- The more TV adolescents watch, the more likely they are to develop attention and learning problems, and to do poorly in school in the long-run...
- Much homework is the antithesis of holistic learning because it brings the constraints and limitations of the education system into homes...



Bullying

- Benjamin Cox went from sweet, sporty kindy student at 5 to nerve-racked victim of bullying at 7, to the overweight, mentally ill shell of a man...
- What has driven so many school mass killers in USA and beyond - severe bullying...

Alcohol

- Young girls are the new face of underage drinking, lured to hastily organised booze sessions in parks & beaches by sites such as MySpace...
- Our binge-drinking culture is a time bomb that threatens


to overload the public health system within decades...

- Smoking rates plummet but alcohol a worry...

Sex

- New Indigenous research shows two out of three sexually-active teens lost their virginity between 12 and 14 - or even younger...
- Increase in cancer rates linked to oral sex: The sexually transmitted virus that causes cervical cancer also sharply increases the risk of throat cancer among people infected through oral sex. The findings

provide new evidence that oral sex is not safe sex...

- Unplanned pregnancy- women veto counselling: Half of all Australian women have experienced an unplanned pregnancy - and most did not want to see a counsellor...
- Abstinence-only education programs meant to teach children to avoid sex until marriage fail to control their sexual behaviour...
- Young women are not heeding the safe sex message - three-quarters of the sexually active have had unprotected sex... 

Snippets

Mental Health Matters Awards 2007

Recognising excellence in mental health, the Mental Health Matters Awards aims to recognise the hard work and dedication of individuals and organisations who have demonstrated a commitment towards addressing key mental health issues on a local, regional or state-wide level over the past 12 months. The awards encourage individuals and organisations who have designed and utilised innovative and effective programs to enhance the mental health in our communities through improving understanding, awareness and service provision of mental health issues. www.mentalhealth.asn.au/campaigns/awards.htm

Cheap computer gear from DonorTec

DonorTec aims to assist charities and nonprofit organisations with Income Tax Exempt status by providing software and hardware for very low or discounted fees, as well as by

supporting you to make the most of your ICT purchases and infrastructure. www.donorotec.com.au

Crime and young people – resources

Garner Clancey and his colleagues at CHD have the following fact sheets on their website:

Crime Prevention Series


- The Ingredients of Crime
- Models of Crime Prevention
- Developing a Local Crime Prevention Plan
- Crime Data
- Costs of Crime
- Perceptions and Fear of Crime
- Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Involvement in Crime
- Displacement and Diffusion of Benefits
- Rational Choice Offender Theory
- Routine Activities Theory
- The Governance of Crime Prevention

- Evaluating Crime Prevention
- The Role of Local Government in Crime Prevention

Young People and Shopping Centres Series

- Why are shopping centres important to young people?
 - What do young people think of security guards?
 - Developing a Shopping Centre Youth Plan
- www.chdpartners.com.au/resources/factsheets.asp

SYN

Launched in January 2003, SYN produces a regular e-zine and a range of other original publications. SYN manages SYN.ORG.AU: an interactive online community for people under the age of 26 to exhibit, distribute and share their content to their peers and the world. SYN is one of the largest youth projects in Australia, and has over 1,000 volunteers. 



What's On

27 June 2007, Marrickville **Fines and Young People**

10am-1pm. An overview of the fines system: State Debt Recovery Office; how to challenge fines; what to do if you can't pay; how to give information to your clients about fines; referrals; your questions. Marrickville Legal Centre \$10.
(02) 9559 2899

13-14 July 2007, Randwick

Let's Talk About Sex: Young Women's Gathering on Sexual Reproductive Health

An opportunity for young women (and men) from across Australia to discuss and explore sexual and reproductive health issues. This gathering will encourage youth participation and community networking, generate new knowledge about rights-based approaches to sexual reproductive health, and foster a better understanding of current attitudes in young Australians.

Contact: (02) 6282 8922 or ywg@arha.org.au or www.arha.org.au/ywg

17-18 July 2007, Mt Druitt

Working with Aboriginal Families and Communities

www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/comm_partners/training.htm

19 July 2007, Parramatta

Working with Young People Who Self Harm

www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/comm_partners/training.htm

20 July 2007, Parramatta

Adolescent and Young People's Health Research Forum

Promoting research into the health and well being of adolescents and young people aged 10-24 years. For health professionals, nurses, doctors, and allied health staff, youth and community workers, academics, students and others. Organised by University of Western Sydney, N-FORCE research group.

Contact Michel Stewart (02) 9685 9080 Tues/Thurs

July-November 2007, Western Sydney

UnitingCare Burnside workshops that explore the use of the strengths perspective:

- Introduction to Strengths - 24 July - North Parramatta
 - Strength Based Casework - 24-25 July - North Parramatta
 - Strength Based Advanced Supervision - 26 July North Parramatta
 - Strengths Based Group Work - 27 July North Parramatta
 - Strength Based Organisation - 1 November Campbelltown
- www.burnside.org.au/organisation/page.cfm?id=35



August, October 2007, Harris Park

Big Breaky

A bi-monthly gathering for youth and refugee workers, counsellors and others working with youth in Western Sydney. August 16 – Eating Disorders; October 18 – Drug and Alcohol.

Contact Desiree or Fiona at High Street Youth Health Service 02 9687 2544 or Fiona. Tung@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au

24 August, 26 October & 14 December 2007, Surry Hills / Parramatta Multicultural Youth Issues Network - MYINN

The Multicultural Youth Issues Network meets bi-monthly to address issues for multicultural young people and the services they use. We need to hear what you have to say, so come join us at our meetings.

www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/facts/myinn.php

24 August & 27 November 2007, Surry Hills

LGCSA: Local Government Community Services Association

All council youth development officers and youth workers welcome.

Contact Charlie Coorey, Marrickville Council, woyth@marrickville.nsw.gov.au
(02) 9335 2158

19, 20 & 21 September 2007, Sydney CBD

2007 NSW Youth Work Conference

www.yapa.org.au/yapa/events/conference/index.php

14-20 October 2007

Anti-Poverty Week 2007

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians. Around the world, more than a billion people are desperately poor. In Anti-Poverty Week help fight Poverty and Hardship. Why not organise a display, stall or award? Maybe a workshop, lecture or forum How about a fundraiser, fact sheet or petition?

Contact: 1300 797 290 or apw@antipovertyweek.org.au or www.antipovertyweek.org.au

8-9 November 2007, Illawarra

Illawarra & South Coast Youth Services Conference 2007

Contact: Berenice Murphy at Central Illawarra Youth Services berenice.murphy@det.nsw.edu.au

12-13 November 2007, Sydney

Survival Guide for New Youth Workers

2 day training program for anyone who has been employed as a youth worker for less than 6 months or want to update their skills. Contact Joanne Bennett, info@yapa.org.au ext. 3, (02) 9319 1100 or 1800 627 323 www.yapa.org.au/yapa/events/survival.php

There is a lot more what's on at www.yapa.org.au. To submit your own event for what's on, email the details in one paragraph in the body of the email (no attachments) to info@yapa.org.au with the subject line: whats on.



NSW Youth Work Conference 2007

**Mercure Sydney
19-21 September 2007**

Highlights

- Paul Dillon, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
- Peter Slattery, therapist and trainer, author of 'Youth works'
- Young people and modern technology: the positive use of MySpace
- Young people and Centrelink, understanding the new landscape,
- Youth homelessness, youth accommodation and support services in NSW
- Ethics and duty of care: A practical workshop
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth issues: Out in the open, but off the agenda
- Working with migrant and refugee young people
- Working with the Media: Achieving successful outcomes for your service and young people
- Schools and youth service partnerships: Youth workers in schools, how, why and what?

- Advocating progressive values, putting young people in the frame: Lessons for youth advocacy from cognitive science

Plug into these statewide networks

- fydo: forum of Youth Development Officers /LGCSA Youth Division
- MYINN: Multicultural Youth Issues Network of NSW
- YJC: Youth Justice Coalition
- FRYS: Forum of Rural Youth Services

Also...

Youth employment and training; policy and research; youth participation; health, including mental health; indigenous young people; case management; new coordinators and management skills; managing challenging behaviours; juvenile justice...

Dob in a mate!

Can you suggest a youth worker to present at the conference, but who may be too shy to put their hand up themselves????!! Please dob them in to John Ferguson, policy@yapa.org.au or on ext. 5, (02) 9319 1100 or 1800 627 323.

Fees? Bookings?

Fees: YAPA organisation members (conditions apply): \$220 full conference or \$95 per day (incl. GST). Higher rates for non-members.

Brochure and booking form are enclosed, are on the website, and will also be emailed out.

www.yapa.org.au/conf

