

YAPRap

Newsletter of the Youth Action and Policy Association NSW Inc

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Centrelink breaches & young people

Melissa Coad, Welfare Rights Centre

The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) recently undertook research on the Impact of breaching on Centrelink recipients. The report, The Impact of Breaching on Income Support Customers, surveyed people who had been breached and welfare agencies assisting people who had been breached on the impact of breaching.

What's a breach?

A breach is a financial penalty imposed when a person

receiving Newstart or Youth Allowance fails to meet either administrative or activity requirements. Failure to meet activity requirements such as looking for work, attending job interviews etc will result in an activity test breach. Activity test breaches are cumulative and result in a percentage reduction in payment (18% for the first and 26% for the second breach) for 26 weeks or for a third breach within two years no payment for 8 weeks.

What did the report find?

Young people under the age of 25 are over-represented among people being breached. This confirms research carried out in 2001 by the Welfare Rights Centre found at that time 52% of all breaches were incurred by people under 25.

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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.)

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Hi from John

Hi! I'm John Ferguson, and I'm the new Policy and Training Officer for YAPA. I'm really happy to be joining YAPA after many great experiences in direct service delivery. The bulk of my youth work has been in Canberra, and more recently, in London, where I worked for local government youth services and Social Services. I've been able to work for, and along side, some fantastic youth workers.

Having a background in psychology, (although I'm definitely not a psychologist!), I have a great interest in the mental health of young people. For me, the term mental health not only encompasses mental illness, as it is most commonly assumed, but also refers to general mental health as well. We not only need to focus on issues of mental illness, but also on what contributes to achieving a healthy mental state. It is really important to recognise this spectrum of mental illness to mental health, as it should influence our work with young people. Working with young people around issues such as anger, self-esteem and relationships is a perfect demonstration of addressing the mental health and well being of each individual.

Another area that I look forward to working on is that of young people and rural issues. I grew up in country New South Wales, in a town called Young, which by the way, is the cherry capital of the world, or so they say. Unfortunately, despite the many great people and positives in this town, there have been a number of youth suicides over the years. I will never forget the sadness, shock and despair of having a young person take their own life and bring the community to its knees. Youth suicide is far too common in rural areas, but it is also indicative of the many issues that young people in rural and remote areas face.

Having worked in the youth sector in a variety of roles, I have a tremendous respect for youth workers and the sector in general. Youth workers and youth services are extremely important in supporting young people as more often than not, they are the only place that a young person can depend upon. Personally, I feel really privileged to be part of a sector that goes to work every day and every night to improve the quality of life of all young people. 



DoCS funding reform: major impact on youth services

Kristy Delaney, YAPA Executive Officer

The NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) has released a new funding policy which heralds radical changes in the way that youth services are funded, planned and delivered.

The new policy applies to all DoCS funding programs including:

- Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) general youth projects and adolescent and family counsellors (AFCs)
- salary subsidies to local councils for youth development workers
- Area Assistance Scheme (AAS)
- Better Futures
- Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) which funds youth refuges.

YAPA believes that DoCS will:

- not cut funding to NSW as a whole, but seek to make funding more equitable and focused on achieving the best outcomes for clients
- replace historic based funding

- with more competitive and contestable based funding
- work out a model of how much a “youth service” costs
- plan what services are needed on a regional basis (using the 7 existing DoCS regions)
- call for expressions of interest from large agencies and consortiums of small agencies who want to deliver services in these regions
- allow “for profit” agencies to also compete for service funding
- replace input-based reporting with client outcome-based reporting and data measurement
- negotiate longer service agreements with services that are performing well
- stop funding local governments and other government departments, ie. local government salary subsidies
- introduce service standards for all DoCS funded programs. (Draft standards have already been developed and signed off by the major peaks including

YAPA).

There are many positive aspects to the new Funding Policy as well as a number of risks.



How to survive the DoCS funding reform

It is important to note that DoCS are moving away from funding “small” agencies to larger agencies or consortiums of small agencies. DoCS define “small” agencies as those that receive less than \$1 million per year from DoCS (basically everyone except a few major charities).

If you are a “small” agency you will not receive funding unless you successfully bid for services as part of a larger consortium.

In many cases where a consortium is funded a lead agency will be identified who will receive the funding and be accountable to DoCS. Smaller organizations will effectively be accountable to the lead agency and

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DoCS funding reform: major impact on youth services

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will report and receive funding from the larger agency.

You will need to strengthen your existing partnerships with other agencies and work towards a

- mapping what funding is provided to each region in NSW from the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to identify how funding

Program Roundtable, the DoCS Communities Division Partners Reference Group and the DoCS Stakeholder Forum. 

“To survive the new funding policy agencies will need to work together to identify regional needs, service duplication and gaps and how funding can be better used to meet the identified needs.”

regional basis of planning and delivering youth services.

This is no small task. Youth services and their management communities have a strong tradition and sense of ownership about the way their service operates.

To survive the new funding policy agencies will need to work together to identify regional needs, service duplication and gaps and how funding can be better used to meet the identified needs.

Start talking with your local youth network, your council youth development officer, your staff and your management committee about these changes.

What is YAPA doing?

YAPA will be working with DoCS to ensure the best possible outcome for disadvantaged young people in NSW.

YAPA is currently:

- mapping what funding is provided to each region in NSW from the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to identify how funding is currently distributed
- identifying factors which identify “need” in a community such as geographic isolation, rate of early school leaving, employment rate, and number of migrant and refugee young people
- asking the NSW Government to invest funding in a project to assist small organizations to do integrated service delivery and planning
- asking the NSW Government to inform services about these changes
- asking the NSW Government for community input into the regional planning process which identifies community need
- advocating on your behalf through forums such as the NSW Youth Policy working party, the NSW Youth Interagency Taskforce, the Community Services Grants

Disclaimer & more info

For the past two months YAPA has been asking DoCS to write to all funded services with a summary of the changes. We have made numerous requests to the Minister and senior DoCS staff to provide this information. We have yet to receive this as a peak organization or as a funded service ourselves.

We have written this article as our own summary and interpretation of the DoCS Funding Policy.

You can read the DoCS Funding Policy for yourself at www.community.nsw.gov.au/documents/funding_policy.pdf



Alcohol & other drugs (AOD) project for rural youth services

During 2006 YAPA will work in partnership with youth services across rural, regional and remote NSW to increase their workforce capacity in dealing with young people affected by drug and alcohol issues.

YAPA will:

- conduct a survey of rural youth services about AOD issues at their youth service
- develop a self-paced learning package on the issues that services have identified (this will be available on the YAPA website for free)
- conduct free face to face training in 3 rural areas for 60 workers.

Free training programs

We will conduct training programs in:

1. western NSW
2. mid- or far north coast
3. south-east NSW or Riverina Murray.

Each training program will be open to 20 youth workers. Everyone who attends the training will receive:

- travel subsidies to attend the training
- a 2 day face to face training course
- access to professional supervision and mentoring for 6 weeks
- a follow up day face to face training

course

- a copy of the learning package plus lots of other resources on alcohol and other drugs.

Cost is free! The first training will start in March 2006.

What topics might be covered?

Depending on the results of the survey we will cover topics such as:

- alcohol and other drugs and their effects
- patterns of substance use
- conducting brief interventions (talking to young people about their AOD use)
- appropriate intervention techniques such as motivational interviewing and solution focused therapy
- dealing with challenging behaviours
- crisis and first aid protocols
- legal issues
- developing policies and procedures
- the range of treatment options and services available
- about AOD services and how to network with them
- bringing about change in your service.

Why are we doing this project?

Numerous reports and inquiries such as the NSW Alcohol Summit

and the Training Needs Review conducted by NSW Health have identified that youth workers are in a key role to address AOD issues with young people because they:

- are likely to have the opportunity to intervene
- have a client base with a high prevalence of AOD problems
- can make a difference to many clients.

We want to make sure that youth workers receive training and support for this role.

Who funded the project?

The Project is funded by the NSW Workforce Development Council, which is a NSW interdepartmental agency set up after the NSW Alcohol Summit.

In accordance with the funding guidelines we will give priority to small organisations and Indigenous workers.

Unfortunately we will not be running training in Sydney, Newcastle or Wollongong – but workers in these areas will still be able to download the self-paced learning package from our website.

What do we mean by workforce development?

This project is a workforce

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Alcohol & other drugs (AOD) project for rural youth services

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development project. "Workforce development" recognises that training is only one part of learning and improving your service. Workforce development looks at the entire organization and what changes are needed for new skills and knowledge to be adapted in the workplace.

For example, our project will involve training but will also include the development of organisational

policies and procedures, mentoring opportunities, action learning projects, networking and resources.

Quick – book me in - how do I enrol?

Spaces are very limited for the training. To register your interest please email your name, organisation name, postal address and phone number to info@yapa.org.au with the subject line **AOD TRAINING**.

Once we receive our survey results we will confirm venues, dates and training topics and contact you to confirm your attendance. 

more info

Further information about the survey, training and learning package will be distributed via *YAPRap* and *YAPA Latest* email news.

Youth services insurance grouping

We are pleased to announce that YAPA has been working with the Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) to establish an insurance grouping for all youth services under NCOSS Community Cover. The grouping takes advantage of the many similarities between youth services to negotiate reduced premiums from insurers.


The grouping is open to all youth services across NSW and quotes can be obtained by contacting the brokers, Aon Risk Services, by email at ncoss@aon.com.au or phone toll free on 1300 363 764. They will forward you a NCOSS Community Cover proposal form

to complete. When you complete the proposal, make sure you indicate that you are a youth service on the top of the first page.

Important points to know about the grouping is that all insurances are with Australian authorised insurers, policies have been designed specifically for the community sector, and services can obtain quotes on any combination of business insurances for any sum insured (up to \$20 million in public liability is available).

YAPA is excited by the opportunity to assist youth services reduce their costs and we encourage you to support this initiative as the more services that join the grouping, the better chance we have of negotiating even better

prices next year.

To receive a reminder of your insurance renewal, email sandra@ncoss.org.au (subject heading Expiry reminder) with your insurance expiry date and you will be sent a reminder and a proposal form six weeks beforehand. Information to assist you compare quotes is available on www.ncoss.org.au/insurance under the Resources section. 

more info

Sandra Handley, Insurance Project Officer, NCOSS (Council of Social Service of NSW), 02 9211 2599, ext 104 sandra@ncoss.org.au.



XROADS

Xploring Road-user Options, Achieving Driver Safety

Seide Ramadani, Bankstown City Council

XROADS is a road safety campaign created for and by Bankstown youth to encourage safe driving and safe passenger behaviour among their peers. It comprises a song and accompanying film clip containing a road safety message.


Through the proud sponsorship from Hoyts, the campaign will be screened over four weeks at their Bankstown Cinema. It will also be utilised to complement future local youth road safety awareness programs.

The film clip has been produced by Fadle El Harris of Filmotion Productions together with local young people. The song writing and composition workshops were facilitated by NOMISe, a local hip hop artist. Together with local young



people, a powerful song called “You’re Gone” was created, sending a serious road safety message to their peers.

Council’s Road Safety Strategic Plan 2004-09 identified that 45% of the vehicle controllers involved in speed related accidents are between 17-29 years of age. As a concerned of group citizens, Council’s Youth Advisory Committee ‘Team Phoenix’ strategically considered the issues and subsequently acted to develop XROADS as a locally and culturally appropriate campaign.

This project has been made possible through funding from “Arrive alive” (Motor Accidents Authority), Bankstown City Council and the Department of Community Services (Canterbury Bankstown Place Project, Communities Division). 

more info

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Does the new industrial relations law cover youth and welfare services?

Nick Manning, YAPA Communications Officer

The Federal Government has succeeded in passing its new, national industrial relations law. But does the new law cover non-profit welfare services?

The answer is not clear, according to some experts.

According to the Government, the Work Choices legislation is largely based on the “corporations power” in the Constitution.

An unresolved question is:

- **Which organisations are subject to federal workplace relations laws made under the corporations power?**

Peter Prince and Thomas John, of the Law and Bills Digest Section, Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia have just published a paper which explores this question. According to Prince and John:

“As with all constitutional issues,

the High Court is the final arbiter [decision-maker] on such questions. However, in the case of the corporations power, the Court has been reluctant to provide definitive answers. With a national workplace relations system based on the corporations power, this means it may be difficult to determine in a particular case whether an employer or workplace activity comes under Commonwealth law.

Instead of providing definite criteria as to who and what falls within the corporations power, the High Court has preferred an incremental, case by case approach.”

They go on to explain the problem:

“Merely being a ‘corporation’ is not enough to allow an organisation to be controlled by federal law under s. 51(20) of the Constitution. ... incorporated entities that are not

‘trading’, ‘financial’ or ‘foreign’ are also beyond the corporations power. ...

The High Court has carefully considered the criteria for a ‘trading’ or ‘financial’ corporation. In the Football Club Case (1979),(67) the High Court held 4:3 that a corporation will be a ‘trading’ corporation if trading is a substantial or significant part of its corporate activities, regardless of the purpose for which it was formed.”

Prince and John go on to examine the particular circumstances of non-profit organisations and incorporated associations:

“Not-for-profit sector

The area where there may be most doubt about whether federal industrial relations law applies is Australia’s large ‘not-for-profit’ sector. ...

... Other organisations in the not-for-profit sector that are



incorporated will not be ‘trading’ or ‘financial’ corporations. ... If they conduct no real business, the High Court would apply the ‘purpose’ test. Provided their constitutions contain a legitimate non-profit object, they will not be classed as trading or financial corporations and will be beyond the scope of the corporations power.

Incorporated associations legislation

Each state and territory has legislation to allow organisations carrying on business to incorporate and register as non-profit bodies. Such organisations range from sporting clubs to charities, churches and aid bodies. Incorporation protects members of such bodies against personal legal liability.

In the context of the Federal Government’s proposals for a ‘unitary’ [single] industrial relations system, it is important to note that, except in the Northern Territory, ‘trading’ and ‘financial’ bodies are not eligible to incorporate under such legislation. For example, an entity cannot be incorporated under the New South Wales Associations Incorporation Act 1984 if it has the primary purpose of ‘trading or securing pecuniary gain for its members’.(85) A body is still eligible for incorporation if it has some trading or financial activities, provided these are not ‘substantial’ and are ancillary to its main non-profit purpose.(86) This is the reverse of the High Court’s criteria for a s. 51(20) corporation. In other words, a body that can register as an incorporated association in New South Wales *prima facie* [at first sight] cannot be a ‘trading’ or ‘financial’ corporation as defined by the High Court for the purpose of s. 51(20).

Except for the Northern Territory, the other Australian jurisdictions have similar legislation.(87) So any

organisation validly registered under these laws—that is, one formed for non-trading or non-financial purposes and which does not engage in substantial trading or financial activity—appears to be beyond the High Court’s definition of a ‘trading’ or ‘financial’ corporation and outside the reach of federal law using the corporations power.(88)”

Prince and John then summarise the issue:

“Key Points


- The centrepiece of the Howard Government’s plan to create a unitary industrial relations system in its Work Choices legislation is to make greater use of the ‘corporations power’ in section 51(20) of the Constitution.
- The High Court is the final arbiter on the scope of the corporations power. Instead of providing definite criteria as to who and what falls within the corporations power, the High Court has preferred an incremental, case by case approach. This means it may be difficult to determine whether a particular employer or workplace activity comes under Commonwealth law. ...
- The tests developed by the High Court for determining whether a body is a ‘trading’ or ‘financial’ corporation and therefore within federal power under s. 51 (20) are commonsense. Nevertheless many bodies may need legal advice to know whether they come within these terms and are subject to federal law.
- Moreover these tests are not set in stone. If the High Court overruled its current position and accepted a ‘prime purpose’ test, a larger number of Australian incorporated entities may be outside the definition of a

‘constitutional corporation’. Their employees would therefore be beyond the scope of Commonwealth workplace relations regulation under the corporations power.

- The area where there may be most doubt about whether federal industrial relations law applies is Australia’s large ‘not-for-profit’ sector. ...”

YAPA will continue to provide information on this issue to youth services. However we also urge agencies to join an employer body such as Jobs Australia and we urge employees to join a union such as the Australian Services Union or other applicable union.

Disclaimer

Nick Manning has no qualifications or specialist knowledge in either industrial relations or constitutional law. Do not rely on this information but make your own enquiries from qualified professionals and organisations. 

more info

- **The Constitution and industrial relations: is a unitary system achievable?** (Research Brief no. 8 2005–06), by Peter Prince and Thomas John, Law and Bills Digest Section, Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/RB/2005-06/06rb08.htm [28 November 2005]
- Jobs Australia www.ja.com.au
- Australian Services Union www.asu.asn.au



creative crytters

Vanessa Ford, YAPRap Feature Writer

Living in a regional area, not much to do, but know a few young people who want to make a difference? Why not follow the lead of CRYT?

So what, and who, is CRYT? CRYT stands for the Creative Riverina Youth Team and is made up of Crytters. No, not those annoying little bugs you find scurrying around on your kitchen floor late at night, but young people between 13 – 25 years who live in Griffith (a town in the Riverina area of NSW). Members come from a range of experiences and backgrounds, including school students, TAFE students, job seekers and Indigenous young people.

CRYT originally formed in September 2002 in response to there being no youth arts culture, or not much at all to do, in Griffith. Since forming CRYT has put on a number of events for young people in Griffith to address this. Amongst their myriad events, they have organised:

- a Jebediah gig
- Youth Week 2003 and 2004
- busker's stage at La Festa (Griffith's International Festival)
- over 40 workshops for young people.

Within CRYT young people make all the decisions. They do the planning, put ideas into practice and evaluate to find out what worked or what can be improved. But they do get a fair bit of support and expertise from

Anne Garzoli, Community & Cultural Services Manager at Griffith City Council.

Earlier this year, CRYT was granted \$190,000 in funding for three years from the Foundation for Young Australians Partnership Grants. CRYT is one of only two regional centres in Australia to get this funding and the only one in regional NSW, so they are obviously doing something right!

So, how did CRYT get funded?

Mostly as Anne said, "truck loads of hard work."

To get a Partnership Grant from the Foundation for Young Australians, CRYT had to first do some research to identify what the important issues and needs were for young people in Griffith and create a project plan to show what they were going to do about these needs.

To identify the needs of young people in Griffith, the Crytters asked a heap of young people and service providers to fill in surveys with questions on what are the good or not so good things about Griffith and what young people need. The hard working Crytters surveyed young people in each of the three local high schools and TAFE, ending up with a total of more than 400 responses!

CRYT also used research on local issues that had already been done by Griffith City Council and other organisations.

What are CRYT's plans with their funding?

From their community mapping, CRYT identified four major issues important to young people in Griffith:

- racism
- access to services and entertainment
- safety
- boredom.

The Crytters then held planning sessions to work out how they were going to address these issues. They broke into groups, looked at the issues arising from the surveys and came up with some inspiration on what to do. And, by doing their own research on what was already happening in their local area and what government departments were doing, CRYT have been able to link in to other projects and make sure they are not repeating the work of others.

With their funding CRYT have lots of plans, including employing someone to help them with their work, create an office for CRYT, create a website to promote their work for the long term and run more workshops and events to address the issues young people raised. Their long term plans are to eventually create a youth space in Griffith where young people can drop in, show films, eat, learn and be creative ... and after that it's on to saving the world. At every stage they plan to make sure that young people are involved and take ownership of CRYT.



What challenges has CRYT faced?

But their success hasn't taken place without some challenges along the way.

Getting young people involved

Sure there might be a few young people interested and keen to get something happening, but it can sometimes be a struggle to get more young people involved especially as time goes on. As Keira McGrath, one Crytter said, "don't expect every young person to turn up simply because you want them too. Young people are diverse. We have different interests, just like adults."

CRYT's advice is to spend time planning ways to get young people involved. Why not go out and speak with a range of young people about what would get, and keep, them interested?

Being taken seriously

The Crytters said they had some difficulties trying to get young people to take the surveys seriously. So they stood there with the young people to help answer any questions and encourage them to complete the survey.

Planning for the long haul

CRYT has an executive of young people who do a lot of the ongoing work. It is this executive who will help to create a long term plan for the work of CRYT. In their planning CRYT identified the need to develop a long term plan to keep CRYT going after the funding from the Foundation for Young Australians runs out. This is something they will continue to

CRYT also made a DVD of what they've done so far, which they gave to the Foundation for Young Australians as part of their funding application and have been able to show to young people in schools and to potential partner organisations in their community.

Involving a diversity of people

CRYT are also mindful of the diversity in their community and of ensuring representation of young people from different communities at all stages. This is particularly important in an area where there are 70 first languages and 40 settled communities!



Staging small events

along the way

CRYT found that young people are likely to sign up to be part of CRYT after they attended CRYT events as it gives them an idea of what they could potentially be part of.

Having small events also means greater satisfaction from those involved. As you know, it can be frustrating when something you are working on takes a long time to get going. But, if you plan small events along the way, and take time out to celebrate the finish of each event, being involved can be a lot more rewarding and fun!

work on in conjunction with putting on events, etc.

What has worked for CRYT

CRYT has a heap of advice that might help you ...

Spreading the word

CRYT has been working with their local newspaper to make sure they get positive publicity for each event they work on. This means writing a media release to catch the attention of the media, contacting local media to follow up and being available for interviews and photos.

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Making planning and meetings fun

Their planning is often tied to events such as making a DVD. Another Crytter, Alicia Wakley, said, *“this way we get lots of people involved. We can get feedback, can do surveys and engage young people on issues important to them. So how we plan is engaging and innovative.”*

CRYT are sure to provide food and an informal venue so young people enjoy coming along to meetings.

As part of their initial research, Crytters also went on a bus trip

Anne also said that it helps to recognise the value of money and pay people for their services, rather than relying on volunteers and sponsorship from adults. This way people take you more seriously.

Asking for help

It's important to remember that you may not be able to do everything yourself. Get to know a dedicated youth or community worker to help you out – it's part of their job to support young people in their communities.

also seek to get involved with their work.

Want to know more?

Sure it has taken the young people in CRYT some time to get their plans up and running, and acknowledging that your plans can take time to happen is really important to keep in mind.

Although, in that time the Crytters have put on a range of great events, had a heap of fun, learnt some valuable skills and

“It's important to remember that you may not be able to do everything yourself. Get to know a dedicated youth or community worker to help you out – it's part of their job to support young people in their communities.”

around Griffith and surrounding areas to better understand their community, each other and the people who live there.


To help keep the Crytters on track they each have their own folder where they can put all the information they collected and document their thoughts as they were planning the project.

Money, money, money

Sure it doesn't make the world go around, but it does help. For CRYT having money has meant being able to provide food and transport so that young people can attend meetings. Having food to offer young people who participate is one of the best ways to attract young people and show appreciation for their time.

Even if the youth worker doesn't have heaps of money to offer, it is likely they can help in other ways like providing a meeting space, computer and their expertise.

Having someone helping can also connect you to other networks and supports in the broader community. CRYT is supported by Griffith City Council, which has links to a lot of other community and state organisations. Agencies such as the Commission for Children and Young People have consulted with CRYT about their views on education and on young people's participation. This has helped to build up the reputation of CRYT as a valuable source of young people's views and increases the likelihood that other agencies will

shown their community that young people can make a significant input. Now, it's on to saving the world for these Crytters ... 

more info

- CRYT:
Anne Garzoli, Community & Cultural Services Manager,
Griffith City Council
02 6962 8145
- Foundation for Young Australians:
www.youngaustralians.org
03 9670 5436.



Causes of crime

Part 2 in our youth crime series

Garner Clancey, CHD Partners

Introduction

There has been and will continue to be heated debate about the causes of crime. Some theorists and commentators explain crime by focusing on the individual offender and their motivations. This approach suggests that individuals operate from free will, meaning that people make rational choices to either offend or to not offend. Other theorists and commentators place greater emphasis on “structural determinants”, suggesting that unemployment, poverty and access to adequate housing will be critical factors in offending.

I will review some of the key explanations of crime, drawing on contemporary research and theories. An understanding of the causes of crime is essential for any attempt to prevent crime, which will be the focus of the next article in this series.

The Diversity of Crime

Explanations of crime have to account for the diverse nature of criminal activity. The motives of a professional car thief may be very different to a young person who

steals a letter box in front of his intoxicated friends. Illegal dumping of waste products, dangerous driving, insider trading, assault, cyber-stalking and identity fraud all involve very different modes, different motivations and different rewards. Consequently, attempts to explain crime by reference to a single cause will often be of limited utility.

“Proximate” and “distal” causes

Don Weatherburn (Director, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research) draws attention to “proximate” and “distal” causes of crime.¹ This idea helps to differentiate between those circumstances and characteristics that are closely related to offending (proximate) and those that are less closely related (distal).

For example, a fight breaks out between two males outside a licensed venue after closing time. Explanation for this offence could include:

- intoxication
- the effect of the audience
- the absence of security
- poor anger management by the protagonists
- poor socialisation
- ineffective parenting
- violent childhoods
- neighbourhoods.

These explanations range from

proximate (close) to distal (more distant) causes.

The importance of drawing this distinction resides in strategies employed to prevent offending. Strategies to manage the proximate causes might merely reduce opportunity but have little impact on motivation of offenders. Alternative opportunities might arise for frustrations and anger to be inappropriately expressed if deeper motivations are not also tackled.



Risk and protective factors

Building on the difference between close and distant factors associated with criminality, is the difference between “risk” and “protective” factors. Risk factors are obviously associated with increased tendency to offend, while protective factors inhibit or reduce potential involvement in crime.

Attention has frequently been given to the risk factors associated with offending behaviour, with little attention to those factors that protect an individual against likelihood of offending. Developmental criminology has attended to this imbalance, drawing attention to the positive factors that protect many people from routinely

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Causes of crime

Part 2 in our youth crime series

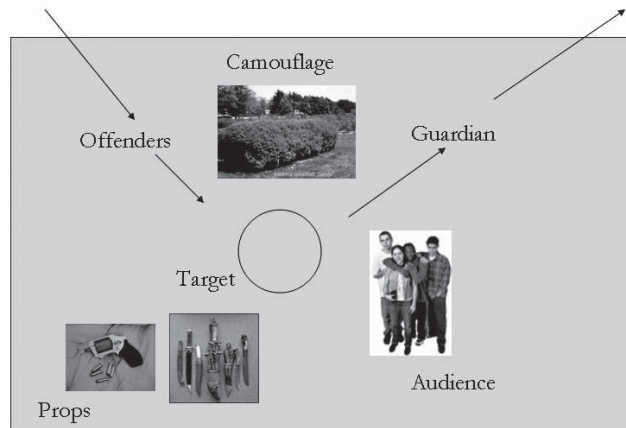
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engaging in crime. Part of this thinking emerged when consideration was given to the question of why most people do not offend, rather than merely considering why people do offend. Early theorists interested in factors that protect against offending suggested that relationships are critical in protecting against criminality. By observing that many offenders desisted

(stopped) from crime when they got married, became parents or entered long-term relationships, and that those people with meaningful connections to people within their communities were less likely to participate in crime, strong relationships could be argued to be reasons for non-offending.

Recent attention to risk and protective factors for criminality has highlighted the importance of key transition points in life. These transition points often disrupt previous relationships, patterns of behaviour or protective factors. For example, leaving primary school and commencing high school has been identified as a key transition point. Primary school students are supervised largely by one teacher each day of the schooling year. These students remain in the same class, largely, and establish attachments to class mates and teachers. Secondary school requires higher levels of

The Setting for Crime



Felson, 2002: 23

slightly greater detail.

Individual determinants

The rational choice theory suggests that people weigh up the costs and benefits of committing a particular offence. As a rational being, if there are few risks involved and greater rewards, then the offence will be committed. An adaptation of this theory is provided below. This diagram²

reflects some of the key characteristics which must be present for an offence to occur. While some suggest that this theory neglects complex personal characteristics associated with offending (ie. mental illness, alcohol and other drug use, experiences of child abuse and neglect), it does provide a helpful scheme, particularly for those interested in preventing crime.

Analysis of risk and protective factors tends to highlight the levels at which risk and protective factors operate. Some of these levels include:

- individual
- family
- school
- community / neighbourhood.

An individual's limited impulse control might put them at risk of opportunistic offending; neglect within the family might increase risk of offending; poor school performance and truancy can contribute to increased risk and neighbourhoods with low collective power (ie. low informal social control) will facilitate drift to offending. I will consider each of these levels in

- The ingredients of crime include:
1. **A motivated offender** – there must be a motivated offender for a crime to take place. The motivated offender moves in and observes a suitable target.
 2. **A suitable target** – a suitable target could include a person, an item (including drugs, cars, mobile phones, etc.) or structure (fence, rail car, bridge, etc.). The motivated, rational offender decides whether there are risks involved in committing the offence.



3. **Absence of capable guardians** – a motivated offender will offend against a suitable target in the absence of capable guardians. The loss of milk and bread home delivery personnel, ticket conductors and non-working mothers, for example, have reduced the number of capable guardians in our communities and neighbourhoods. Security guards and rangers have in some instances, assumed the ‘eyes and ears’ role once played by these local people.
4. **Presence of props and an audience** – the risk of crime is accelerated by the presence of props (i.e. weapons, spray paint, screw drivers) and an audience. An audience can goad a motivated offender to steal, assault, rob and damage property.
5. **Presence of camouflage** – finally, the presence of camouflage can increase the likelihood of an offence occurring. Hiding spots, sheltered locations and poorly lit spaces will increase the chances of offending.

The rational choice offender theory has informed many crime prevention techniques in recent times (i.e. improved lighting, increased surveillance, home and vehicle security, alarms, SIM cards).

Family determinants

The range of family determinants identified as being related to criminality include:

- offending by other family members
- abuse and neglect
- alcohol and other drug use
- erratic and inconsistent parenting.

The research evidence regarding the relationship between these family characteristics and criminality is

complicated by the difficulty of separating out variables that impact on families (poverty, neighbourhood, unemployment, etc.) and the nature of the relationships and experience of family members. One study that sought to unravel this complexity was a study undertaken by Weatherburn and Lind (1997). They concluded that:

“Juvenile participation in crime (measured as rates of Children’s Court appearances for property or violent offences) was positively correlated with [ie. mutually connected to] the following measures of social and economic stress:

- *poverty (measured as the percentage of households with an income under \$16,000)*
- *unemployment*
- *single parent families*
- *residential stability*
- *crowded dwellings.”*³

They found that these factors increased the likelihood of neglect, and that it was this neglect that facilitated greater involvement with offending. Consequently, while factors associated with the family are worthy sites of intervention, attention must also be given to wider structural issues, including employment, social welfare practices and parenting support.

School

The importance of school has long been understood in preventing crime. School provides socialisation into expected behavioural norms, opportunities to acquire an education and structured activities during the day. Conversely, for some, school represents a place of danger, unhappy scholastic experiences and a place to be avoided. Truancy, poor school performance and association with offending peers are some of the factors that link schools to offending.

Community / neighbourhood determinants

With increased capabilities to geographically map crime, there has been growing interest in the spatial distribution of crime. Various research projects have demonstrated the concentration of many crimes in specific locations. While the figures vary, studies from different countries have suggested the following:

- as much as 50% of police calls were received from 3% of the streets in one American city
- 40% of crime happened to 4% of the population in the UK
- more than two-thirds of robberies occurred in 10% of council areas in NSW.

Despite the discrepancies, these data point to the geographic concentration of crime.

One theorist (Robert Sampson) interested in the community factors associated with crime, suggests that those communities with low ‘collective efficacy’ are more likely to be sites of high crime. Collective efficacy occurs when communities / neighbourhoods take collective action to maintain public order. This might involve making complaints to local authorities about particular activities, maintaining the amenity of homes and the local area and taking responsibility to challenge inappropriate behaviour by young people in the neighbourhood. Neighbourhoods with mutual trust and shared expectations protect against crime. Residential stability, high home ownership, participation in local community activities, low family disruption and high levels of informal social control are characteristics of low crime neighbourhoods.⁴

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Causes of crime

Part 2 in our youth crime series

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Finally, related to notions of collective efficacy is the Routine Activities Theory. This theory evolved from analysis of the major crimes occurring in the last few decades (car theft and burglary) and the conditions associated with the commission of these crimes. Flight to the suburbs, dual income families, increased expense and mobility of household items and lengthening work days, have resulted in reduced informal social control, increased unoccupied homes and vehicles and increased rewards for those willing to breach home security measures. By analysing the incidence and nature of crime in this way, we move from 'blaming' individuals, families, schools and neighbourhoods for

crime and focus on the circumstances of late modern times. The opportunities for crime, created by our way of life, in part explains the growth of certain offences.

Conclusion

Many different explanations have been employed to explain crime. Some focus on individual responsibility, while others point to family, schooling, community and neighbourhood characteristics. Understanding the causes of crime helps both to consider ways to prevent crime and ways that the youth sector can meaningfully participate in prevention. In the next edition we will explore different methods of prevention, highlighting

the role that youth services can assume in preventing crime.

¹ Weatherburn, D (2001) *What causes crime?*, in **Crime and Justice Bulletin: Contemporary Issues in Crime and Justice**, No. 54, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney

² The diagram is adapted from page 23 Felson, M (2002) **Crime and Everyday Life**, 3rd Edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks

³ Weatherburn, D & Lind, B (1997) **Social and Economic Stress, Child Neglect and Juvenile Delinquency**, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

⁴ For further information about theories on neighbourhood criminality (and other crime theories), see Vold, G, Bernard, T & Snipes, J (2002) **Theoretical Criminology**, 5th Edition, Oxford University Press, New York

more info

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0425 231 825

www.chdpartners.com.au

A survival guide for youth workers

2 day training program for non-residential youth service workers

Have you been employed as a youth worker for less than 6 months or want to update your skills? Then this is the course for you!

The training will provide an overview of:

- duty of care and ethics in youth work
- consulting with young people & evaluating projects
- engaging young people
- lobbying/advocacy & working with the media
- peer support and professional supervision
- access and equity

- drug and alcohol issues for young people
- managing challenging behaviours
- YAPA's role with young people & youth services.

Each session is run by an experienced youth worker and the program includes a mixture of activities, discussion and presentations.

- **Sydney: Monday 20 - Tuesday 21 March 2006**
- **Parramatta: Monday 26 - Tuesday 27 June 2006**
- **Sydney: Monday 13 - Tuesday 14 November 2006**

- **Rural location to be decided - November 2006**

Cost (including GST): \$66 for YAPA members, \$132 for non members

Places are limited and booking is essential. The flyer/ booking form is on our website at www.yapa.org.au/yapa/events.

For more information contact Joanne (ext 3) on (02) 9319 1100 or 1800 627 323 or email her at info@yapa.org.au.

Rural YAPA members can apply for travel subsidies.



Meet a group of young people from USA

Dear YAPA
Good to talk to you today and thank you for offering to publicise our youth cultural exchanges with our USA People to People Ambassadors.

Our groups visit the following places in NSW:

- Sydney
- Wagga
- Tamworth
- Coffs Harbour
- Byron Bay.
- Blue Mountains
- Taree
- Tenterfield
- Ballina

They also drive through various townships on the East Coast. Attached is some background information.

Kind regards,

Craig Morrison, Operations Supervisor
PEOPLE TO PEOPLE AMBASSADOR PROGRAMS

C/O Contiki Holidays
35 Grafton Street Woollahra NSW 2025, (02) 9028 0512

For 50 years People to People Student Ambassador Programs have been providing international educational opportunities for grade school, junior high school, and high school students. Our educational journeys combine hands-on cultural experiences; unique, behind-the-scenes access to fascinating people and places; and amazing outdoor adventures to create a life-changing educational experience for every participant.

People to People Student Ambassador Programs embody the mission set forth by the program founder, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, to “promote peace through understanding” between individual citizens of the world. Over the past 50 years, Student Ambassadors have traveled to all seven continents to fulfill President Eisenhower’s vision of a better world, gaining maturity, confidence, self-esteem and friendship along the way.


One of the most important aspects of our programs is a chance for our delegates to have the

opportunity to meet with youth organisations from places visited in the host country. This experience helps our delegates to gain a greater understanding of the country they are exploring.

We would like to take this opportunity to discuss the possibility of your Youth organisation allowing us to be part of your programs for a cultural exchange with our delegates through participation in for example:

- a homestay
- a social lunch
- sports or
- a musical activity.

Typically each travel group consists of 43 students & 4 teacher leaders all from the USA and an Australian Delegation Manager. Our delegates travel during the months of June, July, and August 2006.

We look forward to expanding our delegates’ cultural understanding as well as creating an unforgettable educational experience. 

more info

please contact us for more information about People to People Student Ambassador programs:

(02) 9028 0512

www.studentambassadors.org



What's On

9-11 February 2006, Sydney

People in Place in People: 1st International Symposium on Environment, Behaviour & Society

This is an opportunity for intensive dialogue on three themes in environment, behaviour and society research with implications for policy, planning and design.

Themes:

- Cultural Identity and the Built Environment
- Children, Youth and Environments, and
- Environmental Experience, Perception and Cognition.

Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney, 02 9351 8765 www.arch.usyd.edu.au/web/research/ebr.html or EBSSymposium2006@arch.usyd.edu.au

18-19 February 2006, Melbourne

Genopolis Y Conference: People and Places for an Emerging Generation

Genopolis Y will explore the themes of creative cities and cultural tourism through the eyes of young people. It will explore the secret life of their cities and their worlds. Today's digital youth generation is the first ever to have grown up with online virtual spaces; for them, how do the virtual and physical worlds interact? An international conference targeting young adults from 18 to 28 years. Focusing on the role of young people in creating the sort of cities they want to live in 20 to 50 years. www.GenopolisY.com

February-April 2006, Parramatta

Access All Areas 2006

A touring exhibition of art and poetry from people living with mental illnesses in NSW. You are invited to submit artwork or poetry if you have a mental illness or care for someone with a mental illness. Categories: Painting, 3D Works, Photography, Drawing, Mixed Media, Poetry. Poetry entries close on Friday 24 February 2006. Artwork entries close Friday 14 April 2006.

Contact Carol Layton on carol@leisureclub.org.au or phone Parramatta Leisure Club on 02 9806 1833.

24-25 May 2006, Maroochydore, QLD

Dusseldorp Skills Forum - Learning Choices Expo 2006

The 2006 Learning Choices Expo will bring together programs and schools with a passion for engaging young people in learning - particularly those students whose needs aren't being met by traditional education. Not a regular conference, and not an ordinary Expo, it is a gathering of 500 teachers, principals, coordinators, youth workers, young people, policy folk and researchers from across the country who are working in diverse ways to meet the needs of their students.

www.dsf.org.au/learningchoices/expo_2006.php . Contact Mikaeli Costello mikaeli@dsf.org.au

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.



Centrelink breaches & young people

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The research looked at whether imposing a breach penalty encouraged greater compliance and what the adverse impacts of breaching were.

- Compliance did not rate highly at all in the assessment by respondents (people surveyed) of the most

- While the serious impacts of breaching such as homelessness, criminal or other risk taking behaviour was limited to a small number of respondents, about one in six respondents said they had travelled on trains without a ticket. Health-related issues

The future of breaching

As a result of the Welfare to Work legislation due to come into effect from 1 July 2006, the penalty regime will be substantially different from the current breaching regime. The new system will involve


“The report concluded that while there seemed to be reasonably high levels of support for a penalty system where people were not meeting obligations, there was a sense that the current penalties are too harsh.”

important aspect of breaching. In fact three-fifths of respondents reported that the breach actually made job seeking more difficult as they had less money for transport, and other job search related expenses.

- The impact of breaching on respondents varied, with the greatest impact being on those who did not live with family, or have family or friends who were able and willing to provide support. Those without support were more significantly affected with housing becoming unstable with 10%-20% of respondents losing housing or having to move to cheaper accommodation. The research found that young people without support became vulnerable to abuse and their education was significantly hindered.

also featured with over one third of respondents saying the breach had put relationships under stress, 17% reported having to cut down on medication they needed while 13% reported increased drug and alcohol use.

The report concluded that while there seemed to be reasonably high levels of support for a penalty system where people were not meeting obligations, there was a sense that the current penalties are too harsh. There was also a strong sense that breaches were often unfair and Centrelink did not always take people's circumstances into account or listen to their side of the story. Ultimately the report concluded that it is the most disadvantaged job seekers that are breached and who face the most difficulties when breached.

suspension of payments, that may accumulate to an 8 week non payment period, and an immediate 8 week non payment for “serious” offences. 

more info

- for free independent advice about your rights at Centrelink, ring Welfare Rights Centre on (02) 9211 5300 or 1800 226 028 or go to www.welfarerights.org.au/centre/sydney
- for copies of the report (850 KB PDF file), go to www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/reports/ImpactofBreaching.pdf or www.sprc.unsw.edu.au and click on The Impact of Breaching on Income Support Customers Final Report





Pro File



Ned Tieppo

Age: 18*

Position: Youth Councillor of Bega Valley Shire, Youth Ambassador for Reachout! and a part of the Reference Group of the NSW Commission for Children and Young People.

What are you doing at the moment? Studying IT at TAFE and looking for a new job.

How would you describe yourself: activist? youth affairs groupie? trouble-maker? Well I try not to make trouble but sometimes end up in it and of course get out of it so it's cool.

Soapbox: In 25 words or less, what do you believe in? I believe in having a good time all the time and enjoying all that has been given to all of us.

What do your family/friends think about what you do? They think it is really good that I am representing the youth and are glad I'm having fun while doing it. I have many friends doing youth work so we have good things in common.

Your worst moment? Probably walking through airport security and having to take my belt off and pants kind of dropped...that's a recent one.

Hobbies/passions/quirky obsessions: motorsport, snow/water skiing. Love being in an Italian family.

Worst government policy: There are a few but either the Uni fees or discrimination against young drivers for sure.

What music are you playing lately? G-Unit, 50, Heaps of mixed stuff (MTV Mash)

Where would you like to be in 5 years time? In the city with a nice firm job in the IT industry.

Fridays, 4pm, you are usually: Chillin with mates or driving to see what's happening in town.

* Ned answered these questions when he was 17. Apologies to Ned if his answers have changed – it was quite a while ago!



News Hound



The only way out is in

The only way out is in is a resource produced by Open Doors staff and young people in Queensland in 2004. It is for young people who are starting to explore their sexuality and or gender. The resource became popular with young people, schools, youth services and other Reconnect services from the moment it was launched. Finally *The only way out is in* is now available on the website www.opendoors.net.au.

Exploring fantasies... in the face of reality

A resource for families of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, *Exploring fantasies... in the face of reality* helps families navigate a clearer understanding around their earlier feelings and thoughts about same sex attraction, particularly when it's their child, grandchild, niece, nephew etc who is the one exploring sexuality, or identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Free of charge. Send a self-addressed and stamped C5 envelope (\$1.00 postage for 2 copies or \$1.45

for up to 5 copies) to Open Doors Youth Service, PO Box 194, Fortitude Valley, QLD 4006.

YAPA Latest

YAPA sends *YAPA Latest*, an email newsletter, every few weeks to members and interagencies. If you don't get it, then we probably don't have your correct email address. Send an email to info@yapa.org.au with the subject **FIX MY EMAIL ADDRESS** and include your name, project or position, organisation and suburb/town so we know who you are.

