

YAPRap

Newsletter of the Youth Action and Policy Association NSW Inc

Vol 16 No 6 June 2006

Howard Government's second attempt to silence young voters

Kristy Delaney, YAPA Executive Officer

The Australian Parliament is considering a plan which will effectively remove thousands of young people from the democratic process of voting.

Under the current electoral system people are allowed one week to enrol

or update their address after an election is announced.

The Howard Government wants to close the electoral roll on the day that the election is announced.

According to the Australian Electoral Commission this would result in 80,000 (mostly young)

people being unable to vote while another 200,000 voters will be incorrectly enrolled at their wrong (previous) address.

YAPA believes
(continued on page 4)



In this issue:

School-based apprenticeships	2	Youth sux	10
Batbus	3	Federal Budget	11
Seen and not heard	3	Rally June 28	13
Human rights abuses in juvenile detention	5	Not a young person's choice	14
Centrelink says no	7	What's On	18
Daniel Donahoo & the young parents forum	8	Pro file: Peta	20

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.

© 2006 Youth Action and Policy Association NSW Inc

Opinions are the author's and not necessarily YAPA's.

To subscribe

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 26 June

Monday 24 July

YAPA NSW Office

146 Devonshire Street

Surry Hills NSW 2010

Phone: (02) 9319 1100

Toll Free: 1800 627 323

Fax: (02) 9319 1144

Email: info@yapa.org.au

Web: www.yapa.org.au

Executive Officer

Kristy Delaney

Finance & Administration Manager

Martair De Pasquale

Policy & Training Officer

John Ferguson

Communications Officer

Nick Manning

Administrative Officer

Joanne Bennett

YAPA Western Sydney Office

Suite 7, Level 1,

48 Macquarie Street,

Parramatta, NSW 2150

Phone: (02) 9687 1466

Fax: (02) 9687 1229

Email: yapaws@yapa.org.au

Regional Youth Development Officer

Kylie Gordon-Wilkins

Administrative Officer

Joanne Bennett



YAPA supports school-based apprenticeships

Kristy Delaney, YAPA

The NSW Premier, Morris Lemma, and Education Minister, Carmel Tebbutt have announced an initiative that will allow HSC students to complete school-based apprenticeships one day a week.

Under the plan 10 stand-alone trade schools will be established over the next twelve months, mostly in Western Sydney at a cost of \$18 million. Western Sydney is an area of NSW that is facing a major skill shortage in trades. The first trade school will open at Colyton High School.

Students will be able to undertake industry standard training in subjects such as hospitality, health care, construction, automotive and engineering. In this way students will gain a trade qualification while completing their HSC.

The plan will be an expansion of vocational education and training (VET) program in schools. Currently at least 30% of HSC students choose at least one VET course for their HSC.


YAPA has applauded the move.

YAPA has been calling on the NSW Department of Education &

Training for more initiatives that provide students with opportunities to reach their full potential. YAPA has previously called on the Department to:

- expand opportunities for students to combine work, TAFE and study options
- expand subject choice to meet the diverse needs and interests of students
- ensure a mixture of academic and practical job orientated subjects.

(see *School's cool???*, YAPRap March 2005: www.yapa.org.au/yapa/policy/schoolscool.php)

YAPA believes this plan will be a major step forward in keeping "at risk" young people in school and in further training and employment. 



Education Minister
Carmel Tebbutt

Batbus

Melissa Armstrong, Coordinator Batbus

Three youth transport services on the Far North Coast of NSW have received additional funding for 2 years.

This is to provide transport for sporting groups consisting predominantly of young people between the ages of 12 -25. The transport services are Batbus, Yaxi and Yowi. The services identified that there was a need for groups of young people to get to sporting matches, particularly those further afield, such as regional tournaments. Lack of public transport had been frequently identified as one of the key concerns for young people in the area.


The benefits of sport are well documented but for some young people

access to events was limited. Factors such as low socio-economic households, rural isolation, no vehicle or one car families, or siblings needing transport at conflicting times all contributed to transport disadvantage.

As the Coordinator of the Batbus I have received a very positive response and sporting groups are extremely grateful to be able to use this new service.

We have followed our existing brokerage model, where vehicles are hired and subsidies provided, to ensure all passengers can afford to travel. In some cases, we have hired self drive vehicles, where the group has provided a driver and we have subsidised the hire cost. This is particularly useful for weekend tournaments in other regions,

where the cost of either keeping a driver for the weekend or paying for return transport, can be excessive.

The Ministry of Transport has funded the 3 projects and will be evaluating the success over the next 2 years. Batbus has been funded for \$10,000 per year. For this relatively small amount of funding we expect to provide hundreds of passengers per year with affordable and accessible transport. 

More information

Melissa Armstrong
Coordinator Batbus, Byron Bay
02 66 858 771
batbus@norex.com.au
www.batbus.net

“Seen and not heard” lives on

Nick Manning, YAPA

Sydney school students will apparently face disciplinary action for missing school to take part in a recent protest against the Federal Government’s workplace laws.

Opposition Leader Peter Debnam called the Government’s attitude to student participation in the rally “a disgrace” and “a betrayal of the community”, even though all the government did was state the law: students could take part in the action if they had written permission from



YAPA members at a different rally

their guardians.

“Those kids who didn’t have permission from their parents will be treated as truants and make up the time in afternoon detention,” a

Department of Education spokeswoman said.

It gets worse. “I’m not particularly supportive of action that really draws and drags young kids out of school who might not understand the issue,” National Union of Students president Rose Jackson was quoted as saying. Let’s hope she was quoted out of context.

Of course the Daily Telegraph put it all on the front page.


This is all typical of the predictable anti-democratic response we hear (continued over page)



“Seen and not heard” lives on

(continued from previous page)

whenever school students miss school to demonstrate. Taking part in political demonstrations is not only an exercise of a person’s democratic rights - whatever their age - but surely part of civics education. Civics education surely must not only teach the mechanisms of government, but also teach young people that those mechanisms are there for the people - all people.

The over-reaction of some media and education representatives to school student participation in this demonstration is teaching the opposite: that our systems of democracy are there for other people, but not for the young. Would criticism be so strong if students skipped school to see the Queen or the Pope drive past during an Australian visit? 



Howard Government’s second attempt to silence young voters

(continued from page 1)

the bill is a blatant attempt to limit the political power of young people across the nation and is in direct contrast to government claims that they are committed to hearing the views of young people.

It was well known that young people 18-24 years old had the lowest enrolment figure of any eligible age group. Figures from the Australian Electoral Commission show that only 56% of 18 year olds are currently on the electoral roll.

Young adults are far more transient than other age groups and are often moving out of home, or changing their residence due to their employment and education needs. As a result they often leave their enrolment to the last minute.

YAPA believes that we need to be extremely sceptical about a government that looks for ways to remove people from the democratic process of voting. As equal members of our community young

people need to take part in deciding the government of the day.

Many of our readers may recall that the Howard Government unsuccessfully attempted to pass this bill in 2004, before it had control of the Senate.

The *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Electoral Integrity and Other Measures) Bill 2006* was approved by the House of Representatives on 11th May 2006 and now needs to be approved by the Senate. It is expected that the Bill will be approved as the Howard Government has control (a majority of members) in the Senate.

The Labor Party, the Australian Democrats and the Greens all oppose the bill.


Labor Party MP, Mr Melham (Member for Banks) opposed the bill in parliament describing it as “putrid legislation” that would mainly impact on young people.

Labor Party MP, Mr Georganas,

(Member for Hindmarsh) said “Young Australians, in particular, who are not experienced in participating in our national democracy and who are just starting their lives as young adults are naturally going to be preoccupied with concerns other than politics. We should not be trying to exclude them for failing to be ultra-conscientious with the timing of their enrolment. On the contrary, we should be encouraging their engagement with the process.”

Labor Party MP, Mr Anthony Albanese, (Member for Grayndler) described the bill as a “fundamental attack on Australian democracy”.

YAPA believes that all young adults should be given the opportunity to vote, regardless of their political persuasion.

We would encourage you to write to your local MP and Senators about your views on this issue. Contact details are available at www.aph.gov.au. 



NSW government legislates to allow human rights abuses in juvenile detention

A coalition of leading children's rights, legal services and peak welfare organisations has condemned the Lemna Government's latest attempt at a quick fix for the NSW juvenile justice system.

The Council of Social Service of NSW, Youth Justice Coalition, Justice Action and the National Children's and Youth Law Centre have joined forces to in opposition to the Children (Detention Centres) Amendment Act rushed through Parliament yesterday.

"This legislation is a licence to abuse children's human rights" said Mr Gary Moore, NCOSS Director. "It allows adult corrections officers to use attack dogs in juvenile centres, allows for indefinite segregation of a detainee and extends isolation to 24 hours as a form of punishment."

"It beggars belief that the NSW Government is legislating in this manner at a time when the United Nations Human Rights Committee has just ruled that they violated the human rights of a young person while in the custody


of NSW Correctional Services" he added.

The UN Committee found that the treatment of Mr Corey Brough who is Indigenous and has a mild intellectual disability, was inhumane and did not respect his dignity. Mr Brough was 16 years old when he was transferred from Kariong Detention Centre to adult prison. He was put in isolation at Parklea Prison for up to 72 hours at a time.

"We believe that rather than entrenching these violations into law the NSW government should take steps to ensure that similarly inhumane treatment is not inflicted on any person in our prison or juvenile detention systems." said Mr Moore.

"NSW used to be a world leader in modern approaches to juvenile justice. This legislation leaves that reputation in tatters. It not only offends several international human rights treaties it also contravenes several recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody" added Mr Moore.

"As the government turns it back on the principles of its own Young Offenders Act which supports diversion, rehabilitation and the involvement of victims and the broader community, it abandons effective crime prevention strategies" said Mr James McDougall, Director, National Children's and Youth Law Centre.

"We must not legalise human rights abuses in our own backyard" said Mr McDougall. "The Premier needs to show leadership and not let the race to the bottom on law and order dictate how we manage juvenile justice". 

More information

NCOSS Briefing Note:
Children (Detention Centres)
Amendment Bill 2006:
[www.ncoss.org.au/bookshelf/
law/articles/Briefing-note-
children-detention-may-
06.pdf](http://www.ncoss.org.au/bookshelf/law/articles/Briefing-note-children-detention-may-06.pdf)

[NCOSS Media Release 26 May 2006]



emma & Debnam: rehabilitate prisoners

Gary Moore, Director, Council of Social Service of NSW
(NCOSS)

NCOSS has called on the emma Government to significantly increase funding for prisoner post release reintegration programs and services following the release of the NSW Auditor General's Report on Prisoner Rehabilitation.

The NSW Government spends a paltry \$3 million each year on funding to community based organisations that provide post release support services such as supported housing, employment assistance and counselling.

No wonder corrective

their health, employability and education skills.

The report does note that the Department of Corrective Services has put programs into prisons to address offending behaviours based on evidence of what works and this should continue.

However, the Auditor General

“No wonder corrective services staff report massive problems in accessing services for former prisoners such as housing, work and drug and alcohol support.”

The Auditor General notes that successful prisoner rehabilitation will make our communities safer and help reduce the cost of crime.

Yet, despite recent small scale initiatives to work in partnership with other Government and community agencies, the Department of Corrective Services still reports that almost one in two prisoners return to prison or community supervision within two years of release.

Currently NSW has over 9,000 people in prison and this figure is growing. It costs about \$174 a day to keep a prisoner behind bars.

services staff report massive problems in accessing services for former prisoners such as housing, work and drug and alcohol support.


And, as recent research compellingly indicates, the level of mental health problems experienced by prisoners is far greater than anyone appreciated.

This Audit Office report also concludes that it is difficult to tell whether prisoners are actually being rehabilitated in NSW.

This is because a lack of data and monitoring performance precludes a judgement being made about the extent to which prisoners, as a group, improved

also comments that until the Department finalises a reintegration strategy for prisoners which clearly sets out the results it wants to achieve, then the risk of re-offending will not be addressed.

The message of this important Auditor General's report should be very clear to both Morris emma and Peter Debnam.

Know what the causes of crime are and be vigilant in tackling them. In this, the rehabilitation of prisoners must be given a massive boost in priority. 

[NCOSS media release 24 May 2006]



Centrelink says no to Youth Reference Group

Melissa Coad, Welfare Rights Centre

Centrelink has a number of community reference groups that are a valuable mechanism to provide feedback to Centrelink about client experience with Centrelink practises and procedures.

One glaring omission however is that there is no reference group for young people. National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN) had been given assurances by Centrelink that one would be formed, however that assurance has since been reneged. Centrelink has instead advised that a Student Reference group will be formed. While we recognise that many students are young people and that there are specific issues faced by students in dealing with Centrelink, we believe that there is a far greater need for a Youth Reference Group that does not exclude young people who are not students.

NWRN recently wrote to Centrelink outlining the reasons NWRN believes that Centrelink should make a commitment to establishing a Youth Reference Group:

The reasons NWRN believes that Centrelink should make a commitment to establishing a Youth Reference Group are highlighted below:

- Young people are among the most disadvantaged in the Social Security system and struggle to understand and negotiate a highly complex system. Youth Allowance has four

streams and sixteen sub categories making it one of the most complicated payments.

- Young people are particularly vulnerable to being excluded from payment or being on the incorrect payment. There is ample anecdotal evidence of large numbers of young people giving up on the claim process altogether as it is too demanding and instead relying fully on their family for support, often families which are themselves receiving income support.
- Young people have the highest breach rates. In September 2004 53% of all administrative and 47% of all activity test breaches were imposed on young people under 25. This is unlikely to change with the new compliance regime from 1 July 2006.
- Young people have disproportionate levels of Centrelink debt. A 2003 report by the NSW Office of Fair Trading found that one in five young people were concerned about Centrelink debt and considered these debts to be a problem.
- Young people have extremely low appeal rates, a fact readily acknowledged by Centrelink. Of 16,000 rejections of "unreasonable to live at home" claims in 2004/2005, only 155 were appealed to the Original Decision Maker, 43 to the Authorised Review Officer and only two were appealed to the

Social Security Appeals Tribunal.

- Young people experience significant problems with assessment of "unreasonable to live at home" claims.
- Young people face difficulties in obtaining adequate Proof of Identity or accessing alternative POI provisions. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged young people who have been forced to leave their parental home.
- Young people often lack the skills and confidence to negotiate the contents of Preparing For Work Agreements often agreeing to activities they are not capable of undertaking leading, in the worst case scenario, to non payment breaches of eight weeks.

NWRN believes the only way to effectively respond to the issues faced by young people is a specific youth reference group. Responses need to be systemic, consistent and fully informed.



More information

for free independent advice about your rights at Centrelink:
Welfare Rights Centre
(02) 9211 5300 or 1800 226 028
welfare@welfare.org.au
www.welfare.org.au/centre/sydney



Daniel Donahoo & the young parents forum

Rebecca Fowles, YAPRap Feature Writer

At 23 Daniel Donahoo found himself unexpectedly answering to the name Dad, changing nappies and doing midnight feeds. He had found himself as part of a new minority of the population when his then partner and now wife fell pregnant.

Daniel is a young parent. After stints of unemployment, part-time work and study Daniel says the new arrival “helped kick me into gear.” Not only did Daniel and his partner buy land and begin building their own home but he began researching and writing and was inspired to become a youth activist for the rights of young parents.

Daniel is currently on a fellowship at Ozprospect, a non-partisan public policy think tank. Daniel’s focus while he has been with Ozprospect has been child and family policy. Whilst conducting a literature review on young parents, Daniel realised that there was a strong focus on young parents within the welfare model and an even stronger focus on young women. Daniel discovered that with the changes in demographics there wasn’t that much information out there about parents aged under 25 that didn’t



Daniel Donahoo

fit into this model.

With these thoughts in mind Daniel asked himself “How do we get people talking about this?” and the background paper *Young Parents: Capable mature and articulating their needs* was born.

The background paper outlines:

- That the Australian population is in decline. The birth rate is at 1.75 children per couple and the age of first time parents is increasing, young parents and their families are now a minority group who are regularly overlooked.
- Young parents are not “bludging” off the welfare system. Young parents are not wayward youth. Young parents are not destroying their lives or throwing away their future. Young parents are capable, responsible and committed.
- The evidence suggests we need

to be proactive in our advocacy, support and encouragement of young people.

- The Australian birth rate may be in decline, but young parents have started up the incline. They have issues that need to be addressed and ideas that must be considered.

Daniel’s concept was to hold a forum for young parents where they could voice their opinions and share their experiences as well as providing valuable information that can be used to advocate for the needs of young parents. After penning the background paper Daniel also put together a funding proposal and began his quest to get his idea to hold the young parents forum off the ground.

Daniel wanted to hold the forum to not only look at the issues and ideas of young parents but to start a positive dialogue about young parents that moved away from the stereotypes of young parents within the welfare model. Another aim was to give young parents a space to advocate for how Government can support them and provide services that actually meet their needs.

With the background paper and



funding proposal in tow Daniel began his letter writing campaign and approached the Federal Government as well as all the state governments. When Daniel first conceived his idea of a young parents forum, his ideal approach would have been to host the forum on a national level, where young parents from across the nation would have been invited to participate and share their ideas and experiences on parenting.

and the NSW Government are exploring a variety of possibilities of how Daniel's idea might take shape in NSW.

With the possibility of his idea coming to fruition just around the corner, Daniel spoke about his motivations as a youth activist for the rights of young parents. Daniel says that he is "interested in a society that supports young parents." When asked about what he wants to achieve with his young

and some of these pieces can be viewed at the Ozprospect website www.ozprospect.org.

In an article for *The Age* newspaper Daniel looks at the perceptions of parenthood:

"It is a real struggle for many mothers to return to work. But if we're to get serious about what we want from childcare, we need to ask for more than just places. We need to consider why we don't get the quality of

“ He advises other youth activists to make their own opportunities through persistence...most times he will write at least five articles just to have one published. ”


From this National Young Parents Forum, information could have been gathered to advocate for policy changes on a national level to support young parents and their families. His idea was at first met with some success in the federal arena where he met with the then Minister Susan Ley to discuss his idea. This avenue eventually did not pan out and Daniel was unable to secure funding at a federal level.

Daniel took the slight setback of being unable to secure federal funding in his stride and continued on the journey of seeking funding for his idea. Daniel began to have conversations with state governments in NSW and Victoria. It is now the NSW Government who Daniel is still participating in conversations with. It is currently looking as though Daniel's original idea of a young parents forum will take place in NSW in 2006 with the support of the NSW Government. Daniel

parents forum Daniel discusses providing a family friendly forum where young people are able to discuss their experiences, issues and ideas and for this discussion between young people to be documented so that the thoughts of the young people can then be presented to government.

When talking about youth activism Daniel comments that "it's about being entrepreneurial" and "making the most of opportunities that present themselves." He advises other youth activists to make their own opportunities through persistence. "I only got government support because I contacted at least eight government ministers. People only see the successes not all the rejections." Daniel illustrates the importance of persistence with the example that most times he will write at least five articles just to have one published. Daniel has had numerous pieces published

developmental support we want for our children, and demand a more holistic response to the issues of work, family and balance."

With the possibility of his young parents forum just over the horizon and with the knowledge that through his efforts the needs of young parents is starting to be discussed this youth activist has learnt the lesson that persistence pays off. 

More information

The proposed forum

Daniel Donahoo
0414 306 275

donahoo@ozprospect.org

Ozprospect & some of Daniel's articles

www.ozprospect.org



Never tell a bouncing boomer that youth sux

Lisa Pryor

There was a time not so long ago when you had to be a teenager to be called a youth.

A time when the term referred to the kind of pimply, gangly teenage boy who might try to mischievously shake change loose from a vending machine at the local shopping centre.

market research focus group which the Federal Government uses to find out what issues concern young people. It accepts members as old as 24. The same age limit applies to the State Government's Youth Advisory Council. As for National Youth

workforce. According to the Macquarie Dictionary's definitions of the word, youth means you are still considered to be "an adolescent", in "early life", going through "the period of life from puberty to the attainment of full growth".

“The program is a worthy scheme which sends skilled and community-minded people to help out in developing nations in Asia and the Pacific but the name hardly seems appropriate.”

At a stretch, the term youth could have also described that earnest breed of school prefect who gives speeches at Rotary meetings about "young people in society today" and organises fund-raising drives so that the school volleyball team can buy new equipment.

Well, those days have gone. You don't have to be a teenager to be called a youth any more. You don't even need to display youthful vigour or hormonal sulkiness to qualify. You can be coming up for long service leave and sprouting the first signs of ear hair and still fit into this category. And I have evidence to prove it.

Take the National Youth Roundtable, which is kind of like a

Week, it is aimed at everyone from 12 to 25.

But these programs have nothing on the Australian Agency for International Development's Youth Ambassadors program. You can apply to be a youth ambassador even if you are 30. Thirty!

The program is a worthy scheme which sends skilled and community-minded people to help out in developing nations in Asia and the Pacific but the name hardly seems appropriate.

It implies that you are still a youth even if you are administering an immunisation program in Laos, even if you have two honours degrees and five years of experience in the

I may be simply identifying a problem of semantics. It is all very well for me to snipe from the sidelines, but can I suggest a better word than youth?

I must admit I have thumped my skull quite thoroughly and I still can't find a snappy yet unpretentious word to describe people who have finished school but have not yet entered their 30s. Almost every term I can think of sounds too derogatory, too municipal or too try-hard.

Young adult? Too reminiscent of that quiet section of the local library which houses novels about girls getting their periods and riding ponies.

Twentysomething? Conjures up images of a naff blogger writing



about the horrors of share house living as if unearthing these insights for the first time in human history.

Kidult? Adolescent? Too negative. Imply that anyone who has chosen a life without a mortgage and kids is developmentally retarded.

Generation Y? Too gimmicky. Sounds like it was dreamed up by a marketing executive trying to flog a book or tickets to a seminar aimed at fleecing executives desperate for tips on dealing with petulant youngsters in the workplace.

I found more colourful alternatives to “youth” in the thesaurus: whippersnapper, jailbait, juvenile, bachelor, bachelor

girl and graduate. However, I don't imagine many of these terms will find their way into official language any time soon. Which is a terrible pity as it would be brilliant to have a Whippersnapper Advisory Council or National Jailbait Week.

But seriously (she writes as she draws to a close, as if writing a speech for a 21st birthday party rather than a column), maybe the virulent spread of the word “youth” through committees, festivals and programs is more than a semantic problem.

To lump twentysomethings in the same category as 12-year-olds is to do a disservice to adults who hold down jobs, vote and pay their own bills.

Don't get me wrong, some of my best friends are 12-year-olds, really they are. But their interests, abilities and concerns are entirely different from those of adults in their 20s. These kids still believe World Championship Wrestling is real. They still own pencil cases with the words “homework sux” scrawled across in unconvincing graffiti writing.

The inescapable truth is that if you are in your mid-20s life is not only just beginning. It is one-third over. Now there's a scary thought.



[First published 22/04/2006 in the Sydney Morning Herald]

Federal budget

Just what is the “Federal Budget”?

The Federal Government is the Australian or Commonwealth Government in Canberra, headed by Prime Minister John Howard. Each year it asks Federal Parliament to approve its plan for raising and spending money. That plan is called the “budget”.

The Federal Government presented the 2006-2007 budget during May. Much of the attention has been on government spending for families, and there were few proposals specifically for young people. Some youth highlights:

Health

Drugs:

There is increased spending on drug and alcohol programs.

Mental health:

\$1.4 billion over four years, including:

- \$380 million for better access to GPs, psychologists and psychiatrists through Medicare
- \$132.1 million over four years for more respite places to help families and carers
- \$36.6 million over four years for community based programs to help families with mental illness.

Disability

\$90.2 million over four years to assist younger people with disability living in residential aged care to find more appropriate accommodation.

Indigenous

\$66 million for indigenous services including primary health care, measures to address substance abuse, the extension of mainstream employment services to many indigenous people, tutorial assistance for students, assistance to purchase homes and seed funding for the Cape York Institute for a pilot welfare reform project.

(continued over page)



Federal budget

(continued from previous page)

Two changes to ABSTUDY– the linking of School Term Allowance to 85% school attendance, and revision of rules for ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement (PES) and Living Allowance.

Expanding the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme to vocational education and training students & Year 9 students. The Scheme includes in-class tuition, tuition for Year 10, 11 and 12 students, tuition for remote students and tuition for indigenous university students.

• **Welfare to Work** — financial case management for income support recipients. 4,000-5,000 people per year will be assisted with financial case management during periods of non-payment when they fail to meet their activity requirements under new compliance measures introduced from 1 July 2006. Centrelink will fund NGOs to financially manage income support recipients during non-payment periods for non-

An Australia where everyone has a fair go is not something that can be built overnight. The Government needs to link its spending in a strategic plan to ensure people left behind by economic growth can have a better chance for housing, work, good health and essential services.”

ACOSS Director Andrew Johnson said:

“ACOSS welcomes the increased investment in mental health, child care subsidies for parents studying, carer payments

“What ACOSS was hoping for was greater investment in solutions to provide better quality, more accessible and affordable services.”

Education & skills

- The POEM pilots are being extended. POEM is an alternative schooling programme for disadvantaged early school leavers which connects them to school, training or employment.
- A new national approach to apprenticeships, training and skills recognition
- A \$1000 incentive paid to employers taking on apprentices in rural and regional areas will now be paid to employers of Certificate II, III or IV New Apprentices commencing in occupations that are in skill shortage.

Welfare

- **Carers** - One off Carer Bonus - \$1,000 for Carer Payment, \$600 for Carer Allowance.

compliance. This assistance will be targeted to job seekers with children or other vulnerable dependents. This will also be available to individuals who are exceptionally vulnerable.


Responses

President of the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) Lin Hatfield Dodds said:

“Given the largesse of this Budget, the Government had a golden opportunity to spend more to make sure Australians who are really struggling have a fair go.

Low income Australians in paid work have gained through adjustments to income tax and family payments changes. What ACOSS was hoping for was greater investment in solutions to provide better quality, more accessible and affordable services.

and aged and disability care.

ACOSS would like to see greater investment in services like housing, indigenous health, dental care, child care, supports and services for jobless Australians to change the lives of people on low incomes.” 

More information

You can wade through the budget details at:

- www.budget.gov.au
- or for Centrelink payments, Reconnect, YouthLinx etc try www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/budget/budget2006-budget2006.htm

[Thanks to ACOSS and the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia for information in this article]



Rally June 28: NSW says no to unfair work laws

Dear friend

Sacked by text message...

Fired then rehired on a contract that pays \$200 less a week...

Pay docked for doing a whip around for the widow of a mate killed on the job...

All around the nation Australians have felt first-hand the real cost of the Howard Government's new industrial relations laws.

Show the Government what you think of their unfair IR laws. Keep the pressure on and rally nationwide on Wednesday June 28.

Sydney metro rally 9am, Blacktown
Blacktown Showground, Richmond Road

Newcastle rally: 10am
Newcastle Panthers Club, King Street, Newcastle

Bathurst rally: 12 noon
Machatti Park, Bathurst

Wollongong rally: 12 noon
Lowden Square, Wollongong

Last November hundreds of thousands of Australians took to the streets and filled community venues to show their disgust for the Howard Government's legislation. Ignoring popular opinion, the Government used its Senate majority to ram the laws through parliament.

As petrol prices and interest rates continue to rise, the average employee got tax cuts of only \$7 or \$10 a week in the recent federal budget. At the same time our job security has been undermined by the new IR laws, which attack the pay and conditions we all rely on.

As we count down to the next election, a new worker, and a new family, is affected by these IR laws every day. We must show these workers our support, and show the Government that we will never forget the human impact of their radical laws. We have to show both sides of politics that Australians will fight for our rights at work.

Visit the Rights at Work website for venue details, and up-to-date fact sheets about how the laws affect you. Download a poster for the rally and week of action at www.rightsatwork.com.au/campaigns/weekofaction

Many thanks,

Sharan Burrow, Greg Combet, and the Rights at Work campaign team.



Not a young person's choice: Young people, industrial relations & workplace negotiations

John Ferguson, YAPA



Earlier this year YAPA surveyed young people about negotiating at work. We released some results in April which were quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald. Here is the full report on the survey.

Young people in Australia are a diverse group in our community, but they will all be impacted upon by the new industrial relations system. In response to the Federal Government's new *Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Act 2005*, YAPA

the experiences and perceptions of young people in relation to workplace negotiation.

Previous studies have provided valuable insights into the working environment for young people. In 2005, the NSW Commission for Children and Young People found 48% of working young people aged between 12 and 16 had experienced verbal harassment, while 23% had experienced physical harassment. Also in 2005, the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT) found that some young people work unpaid overtime, 12% had worked unpaid work trials, and 23% had experienced bullying at work. A similar report, published by

The *Negotiating at Work* survey aimed to:

1. Document young people's satisfaction and confidence with the workplace environment prior to the new industrial relations system
2. Assess the workplace characteristics that are the most important to young people
3. Document young people's views on award systems and individual negotiations
4. Ascertain young people's confidence in relation to workplace negotiations
5. Investigate the factors that young people feel increase the power to negotiate in the workplace

“I was given an employment condition & had little input into it, and it was told to sign it or not sign it. (15, female, student)”

conducted a survey, *Negotiating at Work*, to address the changing nature of the industrial relations system. With particular emphasis on young people, it was necessary to address these reforms that will have a dramatic effect on the way people negotiate their pay and conditions. To understand the potential impact of this new piece of legislation, the survey would focus on

the SA Unions in 2004, again showed that young people experienced bullying, pressure and exploitation in the workplace. Compounding these issues, the studies also highlighted that young people suffer unacceptably high rates of work related injury and illness. These findings illustrate the risks and inadequate working conditions that some young people already face.

6. Explore young people's perceived reactions to poor workplace conditions

Methodology

The methodology of this survey aimed to allow a broad cross-section of young people to participate. To distribute the survey, a variety of methods were employed to target



as many young people as possible from a diverse range of backgrounds, thus providing a representative sample from which to analyse. Respondents had various options to complete the survey, including a web form via the internet, downloading the survey from the YAPA website, as well as hard copies that were posted to YAPA members. The surveys were also completed at the Sydney Big Day Out in January 2006. Finally, the surveys were also

other young people indicated that they had completed Year 12, a diploma or a bachelor degree. Exact percentages for all questions in the survey can be found in the appendix.

The working environment for young people

The results of the survey provided an overall view of the workplace for young people. For example, young people are most commonly

pay and conditions, nearly one in five are not. Correspondingly, when asked about their confidence in getting the work they want, the majority of young people indicated they were confident, while around 30% indicated that they were neutral or unconfident. On further analysis of these two questions, these patterns remained similar across gender, geographic location, age and education level.

This survey also attempted to

“It took me many years to get confident and I am still nervous about negotiating, I could not have negotiated when I was a new employee in my 1st job. (25, female, bachelor degree)”

distributed via YAPA emails and networks. Due to this, it is assumed that the majority of surveys were completed by young people living in NSW, however, there were a small number of surveys completed by young people living interstate. The survey closed in March, 2006.

employed in the industries of retail and hospitality. Furthermore, they are more likely to be working in casual positions than other types of employment. While working in these types of jobs, the vast majority of young people are also attending school, full time TAFE or University.

ascertain the workplace characteristics that are the most valued by young people. The results showed that a good hourly rate of pay and a friendly workplace atmosphere are very important to young people. These two workplace characteristics were clearly favoured

“When the employer holds all of the power in negotiating it is difficult to get what you need. An award at least gives workers some power. (young female)”

Results

Demographically, the methodology of the survey was successful in accessing a representative sample of young people. There was a consistent distribution of the age of the respondents, ranging from 12 to 25 years. Around 85% of respondents were born in Australia, while 6.8% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. More than half of the participants lived in a capital city, while 23.5% lived in a regional city and 13.8% lived in a country town. Regarding education, a number of participants were currently studying at school, TAFE or university, while

The survey also found that more than half of the respondents were working under an award, compared to nearly 20% who indicated that they were not. However, close to 1 in 4 young people were unsure and did not state whether they were working with an award or not. Similarly, close to 30% did not know whether or not they were a member of a union. Nearly 50% of respondents said that they were not members, with around 20% indicating that they currently belonged to a union.

Relating to the current workplace environment, while more than half of young people are happy with their

when ranked against others options such as a reasonable time to travel to work and working in your preferred job.

Looking ahead into the new workplace for young people

When faced with the two options of an award, with standard pay and conditions, versus individual negotiation, less than 1 in 5 young people said that they would be better off negotiating their own pay and conditions, while approximately 50% thought they would be better off with an award. Again, this pattern remained similar across gender,
(continued over page)



Not a young person's choice:

Young people, industrial relations & workplace negotiations

“Young employees cannot possibly be expected to have the same negotiating skills as their boss. (21, male, bachelor degree)”

geographic location and education level. However, the percentage of young people who were unsure under which system they would be better off was much greater for those under 18 (43.74%) than those aged 18 to 25 (19%).

To assess young people's experiences of negotiation, the survey found the respondents have most commonly negotiated aspects of their work such as normal hours or days worked, and temporary changes to these hours or days. Fewer young people had negotiated leave arrangements and considerably fewer had negotiated pay and other conditions. When asked specifically about pay and conditions, only two in five young people said they felt 'very confident' or 'confident' to

give the employer more power to negotiate. Other factors, such as a desire to not be unemployed and a high level of financial commitments, were perceived to not be as influential in increasing the boss's power to negotiate. However, when considering what characteristics increase their own power to negotiate, young people felt that having specific job skills that the employer wants was the most influential characteristic to possess. The possession of specific job skills were considered by young people to be more influential than other factors such as their own perceived skills at negotiation or the difficulty for the employer to find another employee.

Finally, the survey explored the

a better job. Again, this pattern remained similar across gender, geographic location, age and education level.

Conclusions & recommendations

Proponents of new Work Choices legislation state that it is patronising to young people to assume that they cannot negotiate for themselves. Moreover, they also state that if someone is unhappy in their job, or not satisfied with their pay and conditions, they can simply quit and get another job. It is clear from this survey that these statements are ill founded and that young people will be one of the most disadvantaged groups that will be

“Some bosses eg. my old boss at a restaurant, are very intimidating, I know if I had to negotiate everything around my job with him I wouldn't have gone for the job. (18, female)”

negotiate these aspects in the workplace.

Following on from the experiences of young people with negotiation, it was also necessary to determine the factors or characteristics that increase people's power to negotiate. Young people felt that basic job skill requirements, and the ease of which an employer would find someone else, were the two main factors that

reactions of a young person when experiencing poor pay and conditions in a future job. The findings showed that young people are considerably more likely to put up with these poor pay and conditions (77.2%) than to simply quit and look for another job (22.8%). They are more likely to stay in these positions until they finish studying, get more skills and experience, or find

impacted upon by the new industrial relations system.

When evaluating the workplace for young people, the characteristics most valued by young people should not be underestimated. Firstly, through valuing a friendly workplace atmosphere, young people have indicated that working in a job and interacting with other people in this environment is an important aspect



“Younger people feel intimidated by employers. They often feel that what they are paid is what they deserve. They do not have experience in financial/business negotiations. (19, female)”


of their social development. Secondly, not only is the actual monetary amount important to young people, but the hourly rate of pay also signals a sense of worth to a young person. With a reduction in overall pay, and possibly the minimum youth wage as well, young people will become further entrenched into powerlessness and worthlessness.

Compounded by high youth unemployment, there will be downward pressure on young people to accept inferior wages and conditions. When young people are in competition with others, applying for an entry level position for example, they understand that the job requires basic skills and that the employer would easily find someone else to do the job. In this situation where there is more than one person going for the job, the

more education or training. These alternative options do not happen easily and take considerable time to achieve. Furthermore, if a young person has any knowledge of the welfare system, they will know that leaving a job of their own volition will result in serious financial penalties from Centrelink. Therefore, to the detriment of their overall health and even their education, young people will continue to endure inferior pay and conditions.

The new workplace environment, and its reliance on individual abilities around negotiation, is inherently unsuited to young people. Young people by definition, and through no fault of their own, do not have the skills and abilities to exist on an even playing field as their potential employer. This survey has demonstrated a preference for the

young people unsure about awards and their rights regarding pay and conditions. With the new industrial relations system relying on individual negotiation, young people will need even more information and support to guard against exploitation and coercion.

This survey has clearly demonstrated that a significant number of young people will be greatly disadvantaged in the new workplace environment. In combination with previous studies, these findings reveal that young people are now placed at further risk of exploitation, injury and harassment. The reduction of pay and conditions will exacerbate these issues, but unfortunately, it is unlikely that young people will have the confidence to speak up for themselves. 

“I do not think negotiating is fair to youth, in particular females, as most are not good at bargaining and are submissive. I feel that a set wage should be made and not based on your ability to have confidence to bargain. (21, female)”

employer will have the power to employ the young person offering the cheapest pay and conditions. Hence, a sense of desperation, rather than skills of negotiation, will determine employment prospects.

One of the most pertinent findings of this survey is the indication that young people will not just quit their jobs if they are experiencing poor pay and conditions. Too often used as a response to a person not happy with their job, quitting a job is something that does not happen easily. Young people will stay until they are in a better position to secure another job, for example, through

award system, due to a lack of power and confidence regarding negotiation. Young people need the opportunity to accumulate the time, knowledge and experience in the workforce, and they need to be able to do this in an environment where their pay, conditions and overall livelihoods are not greatly diminished.

From a service provision perspective, it is evident that a Young Workers Advisory Service is needed in New South Wales. While services of this nature exist in other states, New South Wales has yet to actualise such a service. From this survey, there are significant numbers of

More information

- This report with the appendix will be on YAPA's website by July.
- Media coverage of the findings is at www.yapa.org.au/yapa/policy/negotiate.php
- If you have any questions or comments:
John Ferguson,
Policy & Training Officer
policy@yapa.org.au
ext. 5, (02) 9319 1100 or
1800 627 323



What's On

June- November 2006, various locations

Mental Health First Aid Training Course

12 hour course which teaches first aid skills for mental health situations and the early stages of mental health problems. 02 9289 2715 www.mhfa.com.au

21 June 2006, Cammeray

Devils, Drugs and Doctors: Depression and its Treatment

Dr Antony Kidman AM PhD will explain in understandable language how to manage negative moods more effectively using cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). Free session - bookings are essential 02 9514 4077.

26-27 June 2006, Newcastle

17th Annual RYDON Conference

Theme: Evidence 2 Action - 'Working From the Inside Out'. *Day 1 – Who we are:*

- *Personal and professional development through the understanding of self.*
- Take home framework and skills for using reflective practice and understanding emotional intelligence.

Day 2 – Looking at the big picture:

- Understanding the practical nature advocacy
 - Why do we advocate
- How to advocate effectively to build and maintain positive relationships

Contact: 4959 6888

28 June 2006, Blacktown, Newcastle, Bathurst, Wollongong

National Day of Action

Not happy John! Workchoices Horrors Revealed. Send a message to the Howard Government.

- Sydney metro rally 9am, Blacktown Showground, Richmond Road (next to Railway Station) Blacktown (the most marginal seat in NSW)
- Newcastle rally: 10.00am - Newcastle Panthers Club, King Street, Newcastle
 - Bathurst rally: 12noon - Machatti Park, Bathurst
 - Wollongong rally: 12noon - Lowden Square, Wollongong

Visit the Rights at Work website for venue details, and up-to-date fact sheets about how the laws affect you.

www.rightsatwork.com.au/campaigns/weekofaction (02) 9310 4000

22 August 2006, Parramatta

Duty of care training course

Everybody has heard of their duty of care, but do you know the details? These days there are more and more regulations and guidelines - it can be hard to keep up with it all. * Just what is duty of care? What is negligence? Can you be sued?



* Who is responsible: Employer or employee? What about volunteers? * What if the client puts themselves at risk? * Confidentiality and privacy versus safety * Vehicles, clients and accidents - where do you stand?
CCWT on (02) 9281 8822 or <http://acwa.asn.au/CCWT/>

25 August, 21 November 2006, Sydney CBD
LGCSA Youth Division meeting

Local Government Community Services Association Youth Division meets quarterly. All council youth officers welcome. Contact John Gilbert, Community Worker Children & Youth, Waverley Council (02) 9386 7921 or johngi@waverley.nsw.gov.au

29 & 30 August 2006, Brighton-le-Sands
Putting Families in the Picture

A two day conference exploring family inclusive approaches to young people's health and well-being. Aims to promote family inclusive practices when working with young people.

- Working with young people & families where self-harm exists
- Managing difficult behaviours including young people with behaviour disorders
- Creative ways to work with families

Contact: 02 9542 5699 or ian.heininger@aue.salvationarmy.org

14-15 September 2006, Canberra
Communities in Action for Crime Prevention

6th Annual Colloquium of the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (www.crime-prevention-intl.org). A focus on community participation and inclusion, ethno-cultural minorities, women's safety, participation and inclusion of youth, youth gangs and public space, and the role of the private sector. A specific focus on Indigenous communities in urban and remote and rural settings.
<http://colloquium2006.info>

28 September - 2 October 2006, Newcastle
The 2006 National Young Writers' Festival

Australia's largest gathering of young and innovative writers who are working in traditional and contemporary forms of writing. www.tina.org

18-20 October 2006, Coffs Harbour

Winds of Change: Building Sustainable Outcomes in Our Changing Communities

Local Government Community Services Association NSW Conference.

Contact: 02 6650 9800 or info@eastcoastconferences.com.au or www.lgcsaconference2006.com

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.





Pro File



Peta Waller-Bryant

Age: Mentally or physically? 19 I suppose

Current roles: Main broadcaster on *The Rack SkidRow* 88.9fm Weds 5-6pm (Nothing like some shameful self promotion)
Marrickville Youth Reporter for *The Glebe Newspaper*
Member of Marrickville Youth Council

What are you doing at the moment: Trying to survive on a share house budget with limited employment. Right this very second? Probably

not what I should be doing.

How would you describe yourself: activist? youth leader? trouble-maker? All of the above, (with modifications): a not-active-enough activist, a youth leader without a pack, and a trouble maker with not enough opportunity for mischief.

Soapbox: In 25 words or less, what do you believe in: 25 words is never enough, oh dear I'm wasting them. Lets see, equal opportunity in respect to gender, economic advantage, sexuality, race, age, ability and all the rest of the stereotypical answer. But, can one really believe in something that is unfortunately not often there? Oh, so you didn't actually want 55 words? Oops, Sorry.

What do family & friends think about what you do? Well I know my mother likes it as she thinks someone might actually pay me for it one day. What an odd prospect...

Your worst moment: My 18th Birthday, but other than that, probably finding my head in the deadly vice that is the HSC. My word, thank goodness that never has to happen to me again...

Hobbies/ passions/ quirky obsessions: Music that moves me. I find myself extremely passionate about that. I quite like singing as well. Quirky obsession? Getting spilt coffee grounds out of the sink.

Worst government policy: It's a big toss up between industrial relations and those paying upfront university fees having a lower UAI requirement than those paying HECS. But then again, there's oh so many policies competing to be the worst, I think they all deserve a clap.

What music are you playing lately: A wonderful beautiful lady called Kate Miller-Heidke and her EP *Circular Breathing* as well as the lovely Sufjan Stephens and his song *Come on feel the Illinoise* - great song to pump up and dance around the kitchen with a scrubbing brush.

Where would you like to be in 5 years time: Hopefully the same as what I'm doing now but in a professional capacity - radio broadcasting, freelance print media, trying to cause a political uprising and living in a share house.

Fridays, 4pm, you are usually: Dancing to *Come on feel the Illinoise* in the kitchen with a scrubbing brush. Either that, or procrastinating starting something that was due the previous Friday. 🐾

