

# YUWKES!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA INC.

## Income support and young people - time for change



Earlier this year, the Commonwealth Government released a discussion paper *Building a simpler system to help jobless families and individuals* which considered welfare reform and the simplification of the social security system. YACVic responded to this paper as part of the consultation processes. This article provides a summary of our submission.

A reflection on the recent history of the social security system and young people highlights the necessity for reform of this system.

Although the social support system has developed over time in response to changes in Australian society, some of the key income support issues facing young people have not been addressed. Young people and their advocates are raising many of the same issues today as they did two decades ago. Over the years, young people have repeatedly voiced concerns about the level of income support they receive and the subsequent poverty they experience, the degree to which they are eligible to receive income support and the complexity of the system.

Incremental policy changes over the last twenty or so years have not increased young

people's access to a living income. There must be a more fundamental reform of income support for young people to:

- ensure the income support system adequately meets young people's basic income needs
- make the system more equitable by removing anomalies in payment rates and conditions
- make the system simpler and easier to use

Access to adequate income is a right, enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child to which Australia is signatory.

However, too often YACVic hears of concerns about young people not having access to an

*continued on page 4*

### 13,000 school children clean up

On World Environment Day 2003 over 13,000 Victorian school children made their stand for clean air. Fifty-one primary schools participated in the Smogbusters Day of Change, making it the biggest yet. Their efforts paid off, with the final survey revealing an estimated 6,700 fewer kilometres travelled by car. This is the equivalent of a trip to Perth and back! The reduction in car use meant that the students prevented 1.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the air we breathe.

Environment Victoria's Smogbusters guided the schools through a program of sustainable transport education, beginning two weeks prior to World Environment Day with a survey of the pollution produced by their normal 'getting to school' travel habits. On the Day of Change, the aim was to reduce this pollution by as much as possible. Children took charge, educating their parents about the benefits of sustainable transport, and making sure those car-keys stayed on the hook. World Environment Day

*continued on page 7*

### In this edition:

- 2 News in brief
- 3 Young People on Board
- 4 Welfare report (cont.)
- 5 Young Unionists Network
- 6 ASIO and Young People
- 7 13,000 school children clean up (cont.)
- 8 Engaging homeless learners
- 9 Youth in philanthropy
- 11 Blood Born Virus project
- 12 Streetwise Communications new publication

**youthaffairs**  
COUNCIL OF VICTORIA INC.

Level 6, 1 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000  
Ph: (03) 9612 8999 ■ Fax: (03) 9620 4802 ■ Email: [info@yacvic.org.au](mailto:info@yacvic.org.au) ■ Website: [www.yacvic.org.au](http://www.yacvic.org.au)  
ABN: 39 774 045 170 Reg No: A0015316H

Volume 2 | Edition 8 | August 2003  
Print Post Approved PP3332582/0022 ISSN 1445-8403

VICTORIA'S LEADING POLICY ADVOCATE ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S ISSUES

## About YACVIC

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc. (YACVic) is the peak body and leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria. YACVic's vision is for a Victorian Community that values and provides opportunity, participation, justice and equity for all young people.

The main function of YACVic is to make representations to government and serve as an advocate for the interests of young people, workers with young people and organisations that provide direct services to young people. YACVic's resources are primarily directed towards policy analysis and development through consultation with its constituency. YACVic also resources the information needs of its members through regular updates and by facilitating networking within and beyond the Victorian youth sector.

YACVic is governed by a volunteer Board and managed by a paid secretariat. The Council's core funding comes from the Victorian Government's Office for Youth.

## Vision statement

Our vision is for a Victorian Community that values and provides opportunity, participation, justice and equity for all young people.

YACVic actively works towards this vision as the peak body and leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria.

## Yikes!

Is YACVic's regular newsletter. The views and opinions contained in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of YACVic. This publication is copyright, articles may be reproduced with permission from YACVic.

## Contributions

Contributions to Yikes! are welcome. The deadline for the next edition of Yikes! is 22 September.

## Inserts & Advertising

If you wish to include an insert or advert in Yikes please contact the YACVic Communications Officer on (03) 9612 8999 or email [info@yacvic.org.au](mailto:info@yacvic.org.au)

# news in brief

## Sharing a New Story: Young people in decision making

This new report, commissioned by The Foundation for Young Australians from the Australian Youth Research Centre at The University of Melbourne, examines the opportunities and issues around young people in decision making roles. It provides current thinking on 'best practice' as well as a reflective toolkit that has been developed for working alongside young people.

### Summary of Findings

This report focuses on young people in decision-making. Through the voices of young people, it explores:

- what young people in decision-making means and why it is important
  - what is currently happening in the area
  - the challenges and issues for young people in decision-making roles
  - what helps and what gets in the way
- It offers a reflective toolkit, which has been developed for working alongside young people in decision-making roles.

In terms of what works for young people in decision-making roles, there are three key elements:

- Meaning - doing something that has a bigger purpose and that 'I believe in'
- Control - making decisions, being heard and thus having what it takes to see the task through and do it well
- Connectedness - working with others and being part of something bigger

The report challenges all organisations involving young people in decision-making roles that 'taking it seriously will mean changes in the way we do business as organisations and as a community'.

The report makes the case for new roles, connections and meeting points between young people and with their communities.

[http://www.youngaustralians.org/pdfs/Publications/Sharing\\_a\\_New\\_Story.pdf](http://www.youngaustralians.org/pdfs/Publications/Sharing_a_New_Story.pdf)

## Heywire

*'I had a blast. It was the best experience ever.'*

Jacinta Middleton, Postmans Ridge QLD

Heywire has returned in 2003 giving young people from regional and rural Australia the

chance to get their voices heard on ABC Radio about issues that are important for them and to attend the Heywire Youth Issues Forum at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra.

Since 1998 over 2,000 young people have had their say through Heywire and 200 have been a part of the Canberra Forum.

Entry forms and information can be obtained from Justine McSweeney, Heywire Co-ordinator:  
Email [mcsweeney.justine@abc.net.au](mailto:mcsweeney.justine@abc.net.au)  
Phone: (03) 9626 1861  
Heywire Freecall on 1800 26 26 46

Entries close 5th September.

### What Is Heywire?

Now in its sixth year, Heywire is an ABC Radio award scheme for regional and rural youth aged between 16 and 22 years. They are invited to submit a story for radio about what life is like for them. Winners are selected from each of 40 ABC regions around Australia. No prior experience in any media form is required. Heywire is interested in ideas not production skills.

The winning entries are produced by the ABC and broadcast on ABC Radio - on Local Radio, Triple J, Radio National and Radio Australia. All stories are featured on the Heywire website. Each winner is invited to take part in the Heywire Youth Issues Forum which is held at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra, all expenses paid.

<http://www.abc.net.au/heywire>

## Wealth of All Nations - New Report from ACYS

The Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies has just released a new report *Wealth of All Nations: Identification of strategies to assist refugee young people in transition to independence.*

The report brings together insights from consultation and interviews with young refugees, refugee families, policy-makers and service providers, and a range of information from previous research and official statistics to address the following key questions:

- what characteristics define and differentiate the population of refugee young people in Australia?

- what are the 'needs' of refugee young people and what kind of support do these young people require?
- how well are federal policy and programs able to respond to the needs of refugee young people?
- how can service response be improved and what examples of good practice are available?

The report can be ordered from their website:

<http://www.acys.utas.edu.au/>

### Highly Affected, Rarely Considered

The International Youth Parliament (IYP) and Oxfam CAA have just completed a new report entitled *Highly Affected, Rarely Considered*. The report has been compiled from over 400 submissions from 120 countries around the globe and examines the impacts of globalisation on young people.

The report is unique in a number of ways. Firstly, it is written by young people from their perspective. As such, it adds a new viewpoint to the globalisation debate. These young people, all volunteers, felt that the issues raised were extremely important, and though they may have been discussed elsewhere, the perspective of young people had rarely been considered. Secondly, there are wide ranging policy recommendations aimed at decision-makers within different sectors of the community. Finally, the report has a multi-dimensional understanding of the processes of globalisation, claiming they are not inevitable or unstoppable, neither good nor bad. Rather, the processes of globalisation must be controlled to promote dignity, respect and human rights.

The report also marks the beginning of preparations for the next International Youth Parliament, scheduled for July 2004. The Parliament will sit in Sydney, Australia, and as with IYP2000, young people will come together from every continent to discuss the challenges faced, review progress from the last Parliament, and look for new ways ahead. We look forward to working with you towards that goal.

The report, and information on the 2004 IYP is available from the website:

<http://www.iyp.oxfam.org/>

# Young people on board!

As part of the Participation in Practice project, YACVic has been uncovering exciting examples of young people's participation on boards and committees from all over the State. Jen Rose, the Participation in Practice project officer had the pleasure of trekking around and meeting with young people involved in a diverse range of decision making bodies - from organisational boards and committees of management to youth advisory groups and youth driven project committees.

These various groups have been sharing their knowledge to inform the second handbook of the Participation in Practice project, a joint initiative between Office for Youth and YACVic. The handbook will be a resource for people wanting to know more about how young people already are and potentially can be involved in boards and committees. It will provide some information on key issues that make them a success, general barriers that pop up and strategies for overcoming them.

To give you just a taste of some of the many groups that have fed into the consultation process so far...

- members of The Platform Youth Theatre company have shared their experiences of working on a committee of management of which 60% of the members are young people including the chairperson
- the Foundation for Young Australians have discussed the way in which young people are involved on every organisational board or committee and make up the majority of members on the Youth Grants Committees which make key decisions about the distribution of the Foundation's grant funding
- members of the Stuffest committee, which is supported by Ballarat Youth Services, took the time to talk to Jen about how they operate as an exclusively youth driven committee to pull together a massive cultural event for the young people of Ballarat and the broader community
- members of the Push have shared how young people are involved on both the Push board and the Youth Advisory

Group, providing an invaluable resource to the organisation by organising all ages alcohol free cultural events

- the Wodonga Action Crew, a committee of young people supported by Wodonga Youth Services, feeds directly into the City of Wodonga's decision making processes and works on independent projects to provide more opportunities for young people in the area
- members of the Voice Regional Youth reference group met with Jen in Wodonga, to discuss how they maintain a youth reference group across the Upper Hume catchments of Victoria
- the VICSRC shared their collective knowledge of Student Representative Councils and the issues in their operation, as well as sharing information about how their executive committee works to maintain a State wide network of SRC members and supporters
- the project has also observed the development of the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council, an independent council to represent young Indigenous people to influence policy among NGO's and government agencies. Earlier this month the Council was formed after members were elected at a Youth Gathering in Melbourne

In drawing from the extensive knowledge from so many diverse and exciting initiatives happening around the State, the Participation in Practice project has been made rich in resources and ideas. We look forward to sharing them through the publication of the handbooks.

## Income support and young people - time for change

*continued from front page*

adequate income and the negative consequences that stem from this. Young people are entitled to a living income, whether they are employed, unemployed or studying. Assumptions that young people can rely on their families for support or that they require less income than other individuals simply because they are young, should not continue to underpin income support arrangements for young people.

### ***'How come I'm considered old enough to vote and to pay taxes but I'm not old enough to get Youth Allowance without my parents having to be involved?'***

YACVic recommends that the objectives of a just and effective social security system should be:

- to prevent poverty - the system should enable recipients to afford essential service such as health, housing, food, education and utilities while providing a 'gateway' to other services such as education and employment.
- to ensure adequate income for all - the system should not discriminate on the basis of age and should recognise additional costs recipients incur as a result of individual circumstances
- to support people through lifecycle transitions - the system must recognise and respond to transitions from schooling to further education and training to work; transitions of entering and exiting the labour market; transitions involved with parenting and caring responsibilities etc. The system should adequately support young people through these transitions particularly those may not have access to other support networks
- to broaden people's employment and life opportunities - the system must support young people to attain their aspirations and to test different opportunities that are available. The system should respond to the diversity of individual needs

The key system design principles to support these objectives include:

- Simplicity - the system must be simple to navigate and use. Simplicity must take

into account the consumer perspective (i.e not just administratively simple if this has no tangible benefits for the consumer). The provision of information and support should take into account and respond to the complexity of people's needs

- Timeliness - payments must be available when they are needed. That is, waiting periods, particularly while establishing proof of identity, must be kept to a minimum. Payments must be made on time
- Eligibility - recipients should be considered independent as of the age of 18. All residents of Australia, not just Australian citizens should be eligible for income support
- Supportive - the system should reward recipients rather than punish them for failing to fulfil obligations. This would emphasise the mutuality of the system. Where penalties are imposed, the duration and extent of the penalty must be kept to a minimum
- Assistance - the system should involve a common base payment that ensures an adequate income for all and supplementary assistance should be provided as needed to assist with individual needs and transitions
- Participation - participation in the paid workforce is not the only measure of an individual's contributions. Involvement in other activities, e.g caring, parenting, re-training, voluntary work etc, should be recognised in assessing expectations and requirements
- Removing barriers to work - the income support system should be complemented by policies regarding job creation, particularly in disadvantaged regions
- Expectations and requirements - the system should recognise that the ability to participate in paid work will differ according to stages in the life cycle, geo-specific barriers (such as lack of employment opportunities in some areas), health, caring responsibilities etc

***'I changed degrees and I had to sign a form saying I would finish my degree and if not I had to pay back my youth allowance. The system doesn't allow us to change our directions or to make mistakes.'***

## Key issues for young people

YACVic believes that the age of independence should be lowered to 18 while taking into account (as now) the individual circumstances of those that may need to be classed as independent prior to 18.

YACVic believes that there needs to be modification to the current Proof of Identity (POI) system to allow birth certificates and passports to be included as part of, not in addition to, the required 100 points. YACVic also believes that there should be a review of the points attributed to each document under the POI system to increase the value of those documents more likely to be accessible to young people.

***'You have to have a pretty good sense of humour. If you were always worried about losing your payments or getting the wrong payment you'd be constantly stressed.'***

YACVic believes that the Commonwealth Government must make a commitment to reducing the financial constraints that impede young people's opportunities. The base rates of payment for people on unemployment and student allowances should be progressively raised to pension levels. Newly arrived migrants should not be subject to the two-year waiting period. These reforms would go some way towards reducing income poverty experienced by young people.

YACVic believes that the Government should ensure young people's access to services and support that will enable them to fulfil obligations. Young people should not be breached without warning. Importantly, YACVic also believes that where penalties are imposed, levels of income must still ensure a basic standard of living. Penalties should not result in total loss of income support as this simply compounds poverty and disadvantage.

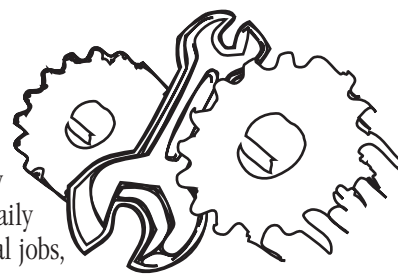
YACVic believes that young people must be supported through the transition from adolescence to adulthood in a way that recognises that pathways will change. Young people should not face penalties for adopting new pathways. In addition, the system should recognise and encourage young people's ambitions and aspirations and not force young people onto a particular pathway simply because it is likely to lead to paid work in the short term.

The full submission can be accessed at [www.yacvic.org.au](http://www.yacvic.org.au)

# Young Unionists Network

## By the Young Unionists Network

Most of us work to support ourselves. And almost all of us have faced issues at work at some point - not being paid on time, not being paid the right amount, being sacked unfairly, being messed around with shifts, or just being treated poorly on a day to day level. But for many young workers, these issues are not just occasional occurrences but the daily reality of the job. This is because of the large number of young people who work are in casual jobs, or are on traineeships or apprenticeships.



Despite the daily reality of casual work, traineeships and apprenticeships, young workers are one of the least unionised (and least organised) sections of the workforce. Only 13% of young workers are unionised (the unionisation rate for all Australians is 24%). There is a prevalent view amongst many young workers that because of the precarious nature of their work, there is little they can do to improve their conditions and pay.

The truth is quite the opposite. Young people who belong to a union earn 20% more on average than those who do not. By joining a union you not only ensure that you can get help from them if you need it, but you will also become a part of a long and proud tradition of collective struggle for better treatment at work. This clearly indicates that collective bargaining works - as do all those conditions we take for granted today that union members before us have fought for - things like penalty rates, regular breaks, public holidays, super, and protection against unfair dismissal and harassment.

Think back to all those times when your shifts were re-arranged without any notice and you had to argue with your boss about it. Think about times when you were forced to work overtime without getting paid for it, or when you weren't given enough hours to pay the

rent. We've all been in these situations and wished there was someone there to back us up, someone to help fight the injustice of it all.

Joining your union can help make your workplace a better place. You'd be surprised by what you are entitled to and what some bosses get away with. For example, did you know there is no such thing as unpaid trial work? It's illegal.

Of course, just like everything in life, nothing comes on a silver platter. Just joining a union will not instantly make your working life better - you have to be prepared to fight for it. But at least you will know that you have support from people whose interest lies in helping you, not making profits out of you.

The Young Unionists Network is a network of young workers who are union members. The network has been established to bring together young unionists from all different industries to organise collectively to fight for our rights. The network is run by young unionists and is open to all who are interested in getting active, sharing skills, information and organising for better wages and working conditions. ■

### More information on YUN

#### Websites for further info:

- [www.vthc.org.au](http://www.vthc.org.au)
- [www.worksite.actu.asn.au](http://www.worksite.actu.asn.au)
- [www.melbourne.indymedia.org](http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org)
- [www.workers.labor.net.au](http://www.workers.labor.net.au)

#### Current Projects + Campaigns Of The Young Unionists Network

##### *Know Your Rights Guide*

A comprehensive guide to young workers rights that will include everything from wages, entitlements, industrial laws and unions. This project is currently under construction and people are needed for research, content writing, design and distribution.

##### *Working Student Centre @ Monash University*

The working student centre at Monash University will not only provide a union presence on campus, information and referrals services about employment and young

workers rights but will also provide an organising space for young workers. The centre is expected to open in February 2004 and is a major project of the Young Unionist Network.

##### *Trainee + Apprentices Campaign*

As trainees and apprentices' young people are exploited, used and abused. The Young Unionists Network, together with numerous trade unions is currently running a statewide campaign to improve the wages and conditions of trainees and apprentices to address issues of the quality or lack of adequate training, unpaid downtime, safety on the job or not being protected by unfair dismissal laws.

##### *Union Summer Program*

The Young Unionists Network is developing a union summer training program to ensure that young union activists have access to resources, skills, campaign experience. The program is due to kick off summer 2004.

### For more information contact:

Camille Barbagallo  
Young Unionists Network co-ordinator  
Victoria Trades Hall Council  
54 Victoria St Carlton South  
Email: [camilleb@vthc.org.au](mailto:camilleb@vthc.org.au)  
phone: (03) 9659 3553  
Website: [www.vthc.org.au](http://www.vthc.org.au)

### Get Involved

#### *Monthly meetings*

Young Unionists Network meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 5.30pm, Trades Hall. Meetings are open to all young unionists.

#### *Next meeting dates*

July 8 : August 12 : September 9 :  
October 14.

#### *Subscribe to the Young Unionists Network egroup*

Send a blank email to:  
[Young\\_Unionists\\_Network-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.au](mailto:Young_Unionists_Network-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.au)

# ASIO and young people

By Claire Mahon & Karyn Palmer

Co-Chairs, Law Institute of Victoria Young Lawyers' Section Law Reform Committee

What would you advise a young client who told you that Government officers had burst into his home at 2 o'clock in the morning and held him there against his will and interrogated him for 7 days?

The young person wasn't told what he did wrong, and even the people questioning him said that they did not suspect him of any offence, just that they thought he may have some information that would help them. Perhaps this is based on things his parents are involved in, or the activities of friends at school. He assures you he doesn't know anything, but was told unless he can prove it, he could be jailed for 5 years.

He asked to see a lawyer, but she wasn't able to help much, for as soon as she tried to advise him or ask the interrogators why he was being detained, she was kicked out. Same with his father who had been allowed to sit in while he was strip searched and questioned, but as soon as his father started objecting to what was going on, he was accused of being disruptive and removed.

The young person says that the officers told him that although they weren't allowed to hurt him, if they did he wouldn't be able to tell anyone who they were anyway as their identity was top secret. He asks you - is this allowed?

Under sweeping new reforms to ASIO's powers in the Government's anti-terrorism legislation, the answer is yes. You may think that this scenario is exaggerated, and not all aspects of it would really be allowed because our criminal justice system protects the rights of innocent people. However, under the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Act 2003* ('the ASIO Act'), this scenario is entirely possible, and perhaps more worryingly, entirely legal.

Since the shocking terrorist attacks in New York and Bali, countries around the world have taken steps to beef up their counter-terrorism laws. Australia is no exception, and in March 2002 the Federal Government proposed expansive new powers for ASIO which included indefinite incommunicado detention of non-suspects (i.e. people detained

without charge or access to legal representation). In the Government's original proposal, children from the age of 10 years old were subject to the same regime.

One of the most worrying aspects to this legislation is that it still applies almost equally to children as it does to adults. The Act allows for the detention, questioning and strip searching of children aged 16 and 17 years old. While it ensures that children have access to a lawyer and a family member, and imposes guidelines on when and how young people are to be strip searched, other than that the Act applies to children in the same way as it applies to adults. It also has severe implications for people such as counsellors and youth workers, as anyone who could reasonably be believed to hold information that could be of use to ASIO in their investigations could be targeted under this legislation.

Amnesty International used the examples of a teacher and a student to illustrate some of the potential breadth of scope of the new laws. In a hypothetical situation, a student submits an essay on terrorism, and somehow it becomes known to ASIO that the essay perhaps contains information that isn't widely known (although could have been obtained from the internet). ASIO picks up both the student and the teacher who corrected the essay for questioning, and detains them in the process. Both the student and the teacher are obliged to answer questions, unless they can prove they can't answer.

The system has the potential to be one of 'guilt by association' or a process that is used as a fishing exercise. Of particular concern for caseworkers and others is the lack of protection of confidentiality. While a lawyer's professional privilege is protected, the ethical or professional obligations of doctors, priests, social workers, journalists or others are not protected, and thus they too can be forced to answer any questions or jailed for not doing so.

There has been community uproar since the introduction of such draconian powers in March 2002, and once the initial Bill was introduced in the Senate it was referred to a Senate Committee and a Joint Parliamentary Committee for review. The Committees received an unprecedented response of approximately 600 submissions. A later inquiry by another Senate Committee received another 434 submissions. The overwhelming majority of the submissions were against the ASIO Bill. A number of organisations made submissions that particularly pointed to their concerns about how the Bill would impact upon young people.

The three reports into this legislation all recommended sweeping changes, one reporting that the Bill 'would undermine key legal rights and erode the civil liberties that make Australia a leading democracy'. All reports recommended that children be excluded from the legislation, although the Government never agreed to this proposal.

After many months of negotiation and amendment the Bill was re-tabled in Parliament in March 2003. Its eventual passage through the Senate in June 2003 was guaranteed by the Opposition agreeing to key concessions made by the Government. One of these points that had been a bone of contention between the parties was the inclusion of children. The Government had raised the age to 14 years, and the Opposition insisted that children not be included. Once the Government signalled its willingness to raise the age again to 16 years, the Opposition capitulated. However, for most advocacy groups this is still not good enough. They claim it is still a breach of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration on the Rights of the Child, such as the right to be presumed innocent, the right to silence and the obligation to protect a child's best interests. There is little doubt that this legislation provides for gross infringements

upon the civil liberties of 16 and 17 year old youths.

So what does ASIO now have the power to do? With the Attorney General's approval they can obtain a warrant from a Federal Magistrate or a Judge as long as they have reasonable grounds for believing that detaining and questioning someone will substantially assist in the collection of intelligence regarding a terrorism offence, or in the case of a child, if they suspect that child has been involved in a 'terrorism act' (although this is very broadly defined). That person is then questioned in the presence of a prescribed authority (who can be a current or former judge, or President or Deputy President of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal). The detained person can be questioned for up to 24 hours (in a maximum of three 8 hour blocks), and this questioning can be spread over a seven day period. This length of questioning is the same for children as for adults.

Both the Government and the Opposition have assured us that the Bill contains various safeguards to protect rights. However, many of these safeguards will be difficult to access and hard to enforce in practice. For example,

while it is an offence for an ASIO officer to treat a detained person in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way, it will be difficult to enforce this when it is illegal to identify them.

The Bill has come under scathing criticism from many community groups and lawyers about the way in which it undermines our legal system and offends basic human rights principles. The Law Institute of Victoria has in particular been concerned with the way in which this Bill impacts upon children. Through our submissions and lobbying we have maintained that children should not be covered by this legislation at all. The Law Institute has submitted to the Government on numerous occasions that children are particularly vulnerable members of society, who perhaps do not have the same maturity and skills that adults placed in the same situation would have. To provide a system where there is little or no distinction between the questioning regime imposed on a child and that imposed on an adult goes against all of the 'standard features' of our criminal justice system.

High Court Justice Michael Kirby said in a recent speech that the Federal Government's

planned anti-terror laws would never undermine Australian civil rights. Justice Kirby noted that section 75 of the Constitution provides Australians with the right of appeal to the High Court - a protection that no Government can legislate against. It will remain to be seen whether the Constitution can uphold the fundamental tenets of our criminal justice system ravaged by the ASIO Bill, particularly the usual protections provided to our young people. ■

## Smogbusters

*continued from front page*



was not just a gimmick to these students, and they stepped out in walking shoes, rollerskates, on bikes, scooters and skateboards, or dragged their parents onto public transport or organised car-pools. Schools were flooded with kids tramping, gliding and rolling through the gates, and many greeted their students with prizes, special

breakfasts and in the case of a few lucky schools, a performance by Captain Smogbuster, the Breathtaking Superhero.

'The kids did an amazing job' said event organiser at Smogbusters, Damien Brosnan. 'Registrations for the day just kept coming in - It just goes to show what a genuine desire there is out there in the community to do something about air pollution and improving community health'.

'Schools of late have increasingly been seeing traffic mayhem at 'drop-off' and 'pick-up' times', says Environment Victoria's sustainable transport coordinator, Rachel Carlisle. 'With 54% of Victoria's primary school students living within 2km of their schools, there is plenty of opportunity to reverse this concerning trend. It's great to see children leading the way and moving us all towards sensible and sustainable transport solutions'. ■

# Engaging homeless learners: The Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) project

By Glenn Bond, MYLO Co-ordinator

## A brief history of MYLO

MYLO began as an action research initiative of RMIT University in 2000. The University sought to explore methods of engaging homeless and other marginalised young people in informal learning. Driven by the findings of a community search conference on this issue, internal funding was found to employ a project officer to undertake the research and develop a model. Results from extensive consultation with young people and service providers were compiled and led to the creation of 'The MYLO Model'. The model went to trial for four months over the summer of 2001-2002 and met with significant success. A research report summarising the development and outcomes of the project was launched in March 2002.

As a result of the trial's success and the accompanying research report, funding was secured through a philanthropic group (the R.E Ross Trust) to run the model as a program for 12 months. The twelve months of funding concludes at the end of August 2003.

**"Getting into work and getting back to school were my biggest achievements. I didn't know where to start."**

## The MYLO model

The MYLO model has, as its centre-pin, weekly informal learning sessions. These sessions are regarded as the 'point of engagement' for the MYLO program and it is in this environment that all the advice generated during MYLO consultations is put in place. Recognising that the MYLO target group have almost uniformly had negative experiences of formal education, the sessions are actively distanced from a traditional education environment. There are no assessment expectations, complete flexibility in attendance and group-determined learning plans. Incentives (food and drink) are also provided. The members choose a group project on which to work, which in the

most recent instance was a youth-focused website. The project acts as a vehicle to maintain group interest and generally includes opportunities for a variety of different contributions. Participation in the sessions brings positive outcomes in terms of resilience, connectedness and self-esteem as well as some specific learning outcomes.

Through participation and engagement in the MYLO sessions, young people are encouraged to explore personal learning pathways with the MYLO worker of their choosing. This support is undertaken at a relaxed pace, recognising the diverse and complicated needs of the target group. Individuals are assisted to explore their learning desires and consider any barriers to success. Where appropriate young people are supported into formal education environments, however in many instances success comes in the form of planning rather than enacting learning outcomes. Participation in MYLO at any level can be seen as a positive step in the lives of homeless or marginalised young people.

## Collaboration and partnerships

MYLO has a reference group that provides guidance and reflection on issues arising out of the development and running of the program. Given the project history of action-research, this group focus particularly on the reflection-analysis-planning-action cycle. Membership of this group has included representatives of Melbourne City Council, Youthnet (Frontyard Youth Services), DET Office for Youth, Good Shepard Youth and Family Services, Salvation Army, The Victoria Police and various relevant parties within RMIT.

In operation, MYLO collaborates extensively with relevant services and organizations. Sessions were held at the Salvation Army Community Centre on Bourke Street until

May 2003 when a move to Frontyard Youth Services was deemed appropriate. The program has cross-referrals with all of the constituent services at Frontyard and MYLO clients are almost uniformly Frontyard clients as well. The signing of a Co-location Agreement has formalised the partnership already in place and the running of sessions at this venue has led to increased traffic and enhanced communication between the services.

**"I widened my social group, improved my email skills and got my name in print. I think the newspaper (magazine) was really good for self-esteem."**

In the provision of pathways support, relationships have been established far and wide between MYLO and a variety of service providers and educators. In particular, JPET programs based in the City, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Brunswick have been close allies. Similarly, MYLO has effective working relationships with TAFE providers, the CAE and other educational institutions.

## MYLO and the broader service system

MYLO provides a unique service not found elsewhere in the service system. It is outside the realm of most education and training programs as it is not necessarily attached to accredited training or education. Similarly, it is outside the realm of most welfare and homelessness programs by nature of its learning focus. Given the purposefully loose definition of learning employed by MYLO, the program seeks to fill a service gap for young people who may be several steps away from making a transition to work or study. The opportunity to own and determine group learning goals and, in some instances, simply to participate in a group forum has been seen to be a valuable pre-cursor to identifying and acting on personal development plans.

Obvious parallels exist between the pathways support offered by MYLO and assistance offered through the nationally funded JPET programs. MYLO has worked very closely with various JPET services, often sharing clients and releasing clients to JPET support when successful transitions have been made. In many instances, however, engagement in MYLO is a step young people are willing to make well before participating in a JPET program or making an interview with a JPET worker. Furthermore, MYLO has greater flexibility in its eligibility criteria and as such may reach even more young people.

MYLO receives referrals from all corners of the broader service system, often when a young person is simply bored or frustrated rather than demonstrably 'ready to learn'. It may take several bites at the MYLO cherry before someone is engaged to the point of considering personal learning outcomes. In the process, and in the event that personal learning plans are not created, participation itself can be regarded a significant learning step.

## MYLO, RMIT and the community sector

With the approaching end of the current funding cycle, the MYLO Project Team are now assessing the future position of the program. It is a commonly felt that RMIT should perhaps move back a step and hand the program to the community sector. As a research idea, an action-research project, a program trial and more recently a twelve month 'pilot', the University was well placed to develop and manage the idea. As the program is refined, however, it is increasingly apparent that MYLO may be best managed by an organization that specialises in service delivery with the target group. Specialist Services in the community sector may be better resourced in terms of policy, procedures and management of service delivery, and are perhaps more likely to attract funding for work with the MYLO target group.

RMIT will seek to maintain a role in the MYLO project, perhaps on a steering committee or reference group, and would seek to provide ongoing assistance with evaluation or reflective analysis. It would be essential for some form of formal handover to occur also, to ensure the substantial learnings of the project are not lost. Beyond

this, however, it is the contention of the current project team that RMIT should step back from management of the MYLO program and complete the action research cycle in this manner. Negotiations are currently underway with Melbourne City Mission (the lead agency at Frontyard Youth Services) exploring these ideas

## It's marvellous what a difference MYLO makes...

The MYLO Program offers homeless and marginalised young people a series of manageable steps towards learning outcomes. In particular, the MYLO Model has been able to make a learning program attractive to those young people who have historically avoided learning environments at all costs. Over 100 young people have participated in the program over the twelve months of the pilot, with the majority returning to participate again and again. For many this represents the first step towards learning since breaking away from the formal education system.

We believe there is a place for MYLO in the Melbourne Community. If you think MYLO might work within your organization, or you think you know where MYLO's next funding cheque might come from, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the author of this report.

**"I'm a very quiet person and was a bit nervous, but the way the group was run was good. There was respect and this made all the difference. It wouldn't have worked otherwise."**

## More information about MYLO?

Questions should be directed to Glenn Bond, the MYLO Co-ordinator on 9925 9541 or at: [glenn.bond@rmit.edu.au](mailto:glenn.bond@rmit.edu.au)

The MYLO Research Report can be found within the RMIT website at: [www.rmit.edu.au](http://www.rmit.edu.au) or by going straight to: <http://mams.rmit.edu.au/a2e5nmvm70zv1.pdf>

The Young People's Project from the pilot program is a website and can be found at [www.mylo.net.au](http://www.mylo.net.au)

For more information about Frontyard Youth Services, go to: [www.frontyard.org](http://www.frontyard.org) ■

## Youth in Philanthropy

By Rebecca Gardner

*'I am feeling strange being the decider... my self esteem has risen a bit and my confidence is growing too'*  
Australian youth grant maker

Previously young people in philanthropy have played a silent role. Traditional methods of teaching young people to be philanthropic, such as detached fundraising for a charitable cause are changing. Young people are now becoming strategic grant makers, and foundations are leading the way in youth participation strategies that give young people a voice and a new perspective on community involvement.

The Youth in Philanthropy project is a new Australian project to promote and further the role of young people in the philanthropic sector. In an Australian first, a group of six foundations have developed the initiative to support Australian foundations to implement youth participation strategies by developing tools and resources, and working directly with foundations.

Youth participation is happening at many levels and in all types of foundations. Young people are grant-makers, board members, staff and even founders of foundations.

This is a generation of young Australians who are more active and more connected to their community than previous years, the most significant increase in rates of volunteering has occurred in the 18-24 year where between 1995 and 2000, the proportion of people who reported that they did some voluntary work during the previous 12 months increased from 17% to 27% .

A youth philanthropy program can support young people to learn about the needs of their community and the organisations that are work within them. The unique advantage of a youth philanthropy program is that young people are also put in a decision making position through which they are able to influence change.

In the USA there are an estimated 500 youth grant making programs, and this does not include the numbers of young people who are involved in their family's foundation or young people who are founders of their own foundation. An inspiring example of an

*continued on page 10*



Adam Smith (Vic), Mardi Jordan (ACT), Brad Lancken (NSW) are part of The Foundation for Young Australians' National Strategy Committee.

*continued from previous page*

established youth grant making program is the Michigan Community Foundation's Youth Project (MCFYP), which was one of the first programs of its kind to be developed in the USA.

MCFYP began in 1988, and was developed by the Council of Michigan Foundations and financially supported by the W.K Kellogg Foundation and the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation. An initial grant was set up as a challenge: for every two dollars raised locally and placed in permanent endowment within a community foundation, the Kellogg Foundation pledged one dollar to build a youth fund. The Mott Foundation issued a companion grant to provide start up support and technical assistance to emerging community foundations.

Since inception, more than \$47.6 million has been matched by over \$100 million raised locally, to create 86 permanently endowed youth funds. A Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) made up of at least 50% young people oversees each of the funds. The average age of a new YAC recruit is 13-15. YACs involve more than 1500 young people annually as members.

Programs that involve young people as grant makers now exist in New Zealand, Canada, United Kingdom, Balkans, India, Australia and the movement is growing.

In Australia there are some great programs emerging that are formalising the process of teaching young people grant making skills.

The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) implemented a comprehensive youth participation policy in 2002, recognising that the most effective way of involving young

people in the organisation was to involve them on every level. FYA's youth participation strategy includes young people in all aspects of decision-making, from the Board of Directors through to the groups that make decisions on specific funding rounds.

Each State & Territory committee comprises seven Youth Grant Makers and between two to four adult members. An adult member chairs the committee with a Youth Deputy Chair. As the Chair is also a member of the Board, the Deputy Chair attends national FYA meetings, including the Board meeting if the Chair is unavailable. The Committee's primary role is to assess the 'Youth for Youth' applications and make funding decisions on grants of up to \$20,000.

The Myer Foundation established the G4 fund 2001. The G4 fund is controlled by the young people who make up the fourth generation of the Myer family. The G4 determine their priority funding areas and make grants based on the guidelines that they have set. The aim of the fund is to encourage the fourth generation to be philanthropic.

The Wingecaribee Community Foundation has a focus on young people, supporting them to determine community needs through running community mapping and visioning activities. They also hosted a youth philanthropy day in 2002.

Some other examples of foundations that have been completely designed for and run by young people include the Millennium Kids which is a youth run environmental group that has provided grants for youth led projects in WA since 1996, and RUMad? Program developed by the Education Foundation that has supported the creation of the Melbourne Girls College foundation.

## Why do they do it?

Understanding the motivation for a youth in philanthropy program is imperative for determining the approach and the potential outcomes. For example, if a program is set up purely to promote the organisation to young people, then young people will be given very little decision making power. Similarly, if a program is designed solely with the intention of developing young people into good and responsible citizens, then conflict may arise when young people try and express opinions that may not be agreed with by adults in the organisation. Ideally, the motivation for a youth in philanthropy program would be for the organisation that wants to incorporate the ideas, perspectives and energy of young people while providing young people with the opportunity to develop new skills.

Organisations that engage young people experience many benefits. These include :

- adults in the organisation understand the needs and concerns of young people and gain a stronger sense of community connectedness
- young people help to clarify and bring focus to the organisation's mission
- the organisation becomes more responsive to youth in the community
- including young people in decision-making leads organisations to reach out to the community in more diverse ways
- involving young people increases the organisation's credibility

One of the challenges of youth participation however, is that young people are not young people for ever, they grow up and so a youth participation strategy needs to be a part of an organisational approach that embraces the input of young people and recognises that this is an ongoing commitment and not just a one off event.

The Youth in Philanthropy Project is supported by The Foundation for Young Australians, The Myer Foundation, The Telstra Foundation, The RE Ross Charitable Trust, Philanthropy Australia and the FRRR. For more information about the Youth in Philanthropy Project; or if you have an experience of working with young people to share, contact Rebecca Gardner [rebeccag@youngaustralians.org](mailto:rebeccag@youngaustralians.org)

For more information about MCFYP go to [www.mcfyp.org](http://www.mcfyp.org)

# Blood Borne Virus project

## The Action Centre, Family Planning Victoria

Family Planning Victoria's (FPV) Blood Borne Virus (BBV) project has been funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services, through the Commonwealth/State AIDS Matched Funding agreement since 1989.

Initially the project took the form of a toll free telephone counseling service and subsequently it has grown and developed to provide a wide range of other sexual health support services for young people. The project also provides sexual and reproductive health professional development programs for professionals who work with young people (Seal, 2000).

Currently the project has a number of primary objectives, including:

- the development, implementation and evaluation of sexual and reproductive health education, support and skills development programs for marginalized people in the community including those who are at risk of HIV/AIDS/STI's and other blood borne viral diseases
- the provision of program support in health promotion and training activities targeted at professionals working with young people
- the work of the project is currently framed and informed by a number of key public policy documents including:
  - the Victorian HIV/AIDS Strategy 2002-2004
  - the Victorian Hepatitis C Strategy 2002-2004
  - the National HIV/AIDS Strategy 1999-2000 to 2003-2004

These policy frameworks direct service providers to ensure that the work that they engage in is consistent with 'Health Promotion' principles. One of the key ideas that such frameworks promote is that there is a link between social factors and wellbeing or health. In the area of HIV/AIDS for instance, Health Promotions Frameworks suggest that where we see patterns of health outcomes occurring across particular population groups that such patterns are linked to cultural or structural factors and are not simply to do with that particular group per se.

Health Promotions Frameworks aim to impact on the structural factors that generate patterns of illness and disease in the hope of reducing the incidence of these illnesses in

the future. Health Promotions Frameworks highlight that members of the community who experience high levels of discrimination or who feel marginalised often experience less favourable health outcomes than the broader population. Social Models of Health highlight the importance of attending to discrimination in order to enhance wellbeing by using a population approach to develop services for target groups.

Health Promotions Frameworks also stress that wellbeing is linked to a person's sense of connectedness to their community. Work that aims to enhance connectedness, therefore, is imperative if we hope to have an impact on wellbeing. Such frameworks are also very clear around the importance of working in partnership with target groups, in culturally sensitive and relevant ways.

The HIV/AIDS strategy 2002-2004 and the Hepatitis C Strategy 2002-2004 identify certain target groups that the research has shown experience rates of infection with BBVs at higher rates than other sections of the population.

The HIV/AIDS strategy lists a number of sub-sections of the population who have higher incidences of BBVs, or who for structural reasons are at greater risk of contracting BBVs, and whom the framework targets including:

- gay and homosexually active men
- people living with HIV
- people who inject drugs
- sex workers and their clients
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people originating from countries with high prevalence of HIV and people who travel regularly to these countries
- people moving through custodial settings
- sexually active young people

The BBV project targets young people (12-25 years) in all of these target groups. The project aims to engage young people in dialogue and to provide them with factual and culturally relevant information that might enhance their sense of connectedness

and support them to make informed decisions in relation to sexual health.

The BBV project also aims to work with service providers in order to facilitate similar outcomes.

The BBV Project is Funded to:

- work with young people between 12-25
- work with professionals and services providers that work with young people
- provide one off and short term sexual, reproductive health and BBV education programs and workshops for young people
- provide one off and short-term training and professional development for teachers and other youth work practitioners around sexual, reproductive health and BBVs
- provide programs for young people specifically identified in policy framework documents
- provide one off and short series programs for 'generic groups' of young people that may include young people from the target groups identified in policy framework documents
- provide one off and short series broader programs that aim to facilitate and enhance young people's sense of connectedness within youth sector settings
- provide one off and short series programs in rural and in urban settings

In July FPV's city Action Centre will be relocated around the corner from Flinders Lane to 94 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

From this site, young people can access sexual health education, support and clinical services.

Service providers, teachers, health and welfare professionals from across the state can access training and professional development as well as face-to-face consultancy for agencies working with young people.

You can contact the Action Centre on: 9654 4766, free call 1800 013 952 or via email: [education@fpv.org.au](mailto:education@fpv.org.au)

# On young people and attitudes around refugees

## Streetwize Communications new resource



**'They want to overrun our country'**

**'They shouldn't be here in the first place. None of this would have happened if they hadn't come to Australia'**

These are some responses from Australian young people when asked about their attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers.

Streetwize Communications, a national not-for-profit communications organisation, has produced *The Other Side*, a new comic designed to raise awareness among young people in Australia about refugees and asylum seekers.

The original aim of *The Other Side* was to provide easy-to-understand information for refugees and asylum seekers about their refugee status and what to expect on arrival in Australia. However, following the Tampa incident, it became evident that there were common myths influencing young people's understanding of the issues around refugees and asylum seekers. Streetwize consulted with key organisations and over 200 young people around NSW to develop the resource. Responses ranged from sympathetic to hostile. Most participants had little or no factual knowledge to support their opinions.

**'Everyone in Australia's from somewhere else, unless they're Aboriginal. Man...we came on boats too'**

**'There are heaps of places they can go. There's no need for them to come here'**

Liz Skelton, General Manager of Streetwize, said, 'Through research we discovered there was a desire to hear about the other side of the story as myths believed by young people included that being a refugee is illegal, refugees are dangerous, asylum seekers are 'queue jumpers' and that the number of refugees accepted in Australia far exceeded the factual amount.'

The focus groups included young people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, in rural, regional and metropolitan areas,

some of whom were refugees. With their permission, aspects of their stories were used in the story-line of the comic to ensure the situations were realistic.

Feedback and evaluation has been overwhelmingly positive from young people and professionals involved in the two year process Streetwize aims to distribute *The Other Side* to young people in schools throughout Australia.

**'I must admit, I came here not knowing much about refugees apart from a news caption. I was not going to come to this workshop because I didn't have a strong opinion, but after reading *The Other Side*, I feel as though I have some basic facts to stand on. It is an accurate example of both sides of the story'**

*The Other Side* is partly funded by the Myer Foundation and the NSW Community Relations Commission. Streetwize has also self-funded part of the development of the resource and funding is now urgently needed to print and distribute this much-needed resource throughout Australia to schools and youth groups.

Streetwize acknowledges the assistance of: HREOC, STARRTS, Edmund Rice Centre, Legal Aid, Migrant Resource Centres and the NSW Department of Education in developing this resource.

If you can help in any way or have ideas about potential funders please contact: Liz Skelton on 02 9319 0220, or email: [liz.skelton@streetwize.com.au](mailto:liz.skelton@streetwize.com.au). You can also visit our website [www.streetwize.com.au](http://www.streetwize.com.au)

Since 1984, Streetwize has distributed over 6 million comics and education resources throughout Australia and around the world. Through their unique networks, within professional, social groups, communities and individuals, Streetwize Communications strives to communicate important information to hard to reach groups in an entertaining, accessible and relevant format ■