

Youth Studies Australia

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Are we on the radar yet?

The youth field may have fallen off most people's maps to a large extent, but that didn't stop over 850 people attending the 'Are we there yet' national youth affairs conference, organised by YACVic and held in Melbourne in May.

The massive turnout, according to one participant, clearly demonstrated the youth sector's 'hunger for a conversation': the youth field is determined to ensure that research, training, policy development and practice are not neglected. This issue of YSA features four papers presented at the conference.

Georgie Ferrari, the CEO of YACVic, leads with a report on the conference. This is followed by:

- a paper that looks at the murky issues that can arise for youth workers who live and work within the same community;
- a look at what happens when longitudinal research invites feedback and input from young people – the results are very different;
- an overview of both the opportunities and the problems encountered in the development of a youth charter guide for Victorian local government; and
- research that found that young people's talk about their alcohol consumption was geared towards presenting an image of themselves and their drinking as unproblematic, even when their behaviour was risky.

The other two papers in this edition focus, first, on the impact on young people's lives of their care-giving responsibilities, and, finally, on the effectiveness of an interagency collaborative project from the point of view of both the young people and the workers involved.

Sue Headley

'Embedded' youth work: Ethical questions for youth work professionals

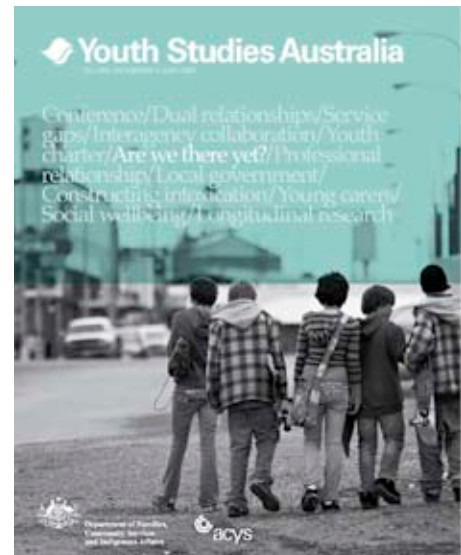
by Howard Sercombe

What do you do when your client is your nephew and is taking drugs? Howard Sercombe outlines policies and strategies that provide guidance for youth work in situations where dual relationships can't be avoided. The circumstances in which youth workers operate mean that the professional encounter is not neatly circumscribed in time and space. Youth workers, therefore, need to be diligent about following best practice in all situations.

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Your answer to a young person saying 'But I thought you were my friend!' should always be clear and unequivocal. That was never what it was about. You were never their friend: you are their youth worker.

Participatory approaches to longitudinal research with young people

by Dan Woodman & Debra Tyler

The Life-Patterns project has been following the lives of 1,908 young people since they left school in Victoria in 1991. By allowing participants to provide feedback and input into the project, the project has produced findings that challenge common sense notions that young people today are experiencing an extended adolescence or making 'faulty transitions' to 'adulthood'.

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The Victorian local government youth charter Opportunities and dilemmas

by Rob Nabben

Since 2004, a process has been under way to support and enhance the role of Victorian local government in youth engagement – the centrepiece of which is a youth charter guide. This paper, written by one of the project designers, explores the context of local government and the intentions of the development project. It is argued that this not only involves organisational change, but re-thinking foundational assumptions about participation, democracy and young people.

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'I'm gonna sound like a drunk here' Constructions of volume of consumption

by Ester Mancini-Peña & Graham A. Tyson

Despite nationwide efforts to reduce binge drinking among young people, the proportion of youth who continue to engage in this behaviour remains unacceptably high. This study suggests that the way young people talk is geared towards presenting a positive (or at least unproblematic) image of oneself and of one's alcohol consumption, even when drinking is at a high-risk rate.

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Using the social care framework to analyse research on young carers

by Bettina Cass (reprinted from *SPRC Newsletter*)

The image of children and young people as unpaid carers sits uncomfortably with our common view of them as recipients of care and dependent. A project located at the Social Policy Research Centre (UNSW) is concerned with placing young carers within the 'social care' framework, that is, perceiving them as active agents engaged in reciprocal relationships of care. The project will map the gaps in service provision which young carers, their care recipients and service providers identify.

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Students at risk Interagency collaboration in Queensland

by Bruce Allen Knight, Cecily Knight & Daniel Teghe

Social inclusion means not only meeting students' academic needs, but also linking services to other significant social contexts – for example, helping families to establish a home environment that is safe and where basic needs of the student can be met. This paper explores interagency collaboration in educational and child protection contexts to enable the inclusion of all students.

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A 'new adulthood' is emerging in a new social context in which the sort of adulthood available to the Baby Boomers is increasingly less possible.

There is no legislated requirement for any direct services to young people, and councils receive little money for youth work from state or federal governments.

Information about risky and dangerous patterns of drinking is unlikely to engage young people who see their consumption as normal or justifiable.

A number of young carers are 'hidden' and do not identify as a care-giver, predominantly because they see themselves as carrying out their family obligations and not requiring, or unwilling to claim, services and benefits.

Various barriers to successful collaboration between educational and social/protection services translate into children at risk receiving inadequate services from both systems.

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