

# Peak news

Youth sector peak organisations report on recent activities

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The lack of a 'youth policy' in Western Australia is of enormous concern to many in the youth sector. It seems as if after a focus on 'youth' in the 80s there has been a gradual decline in attention by any state government to the development of sustainable policies that meet the needs of the young people of Western Australia.

At the invitation of the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, AnglicareWA and the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Dave Turner (who hails from South Australia) presented an important seminar to invited guests from an array of both government and non-government departments, along with leaders in the area of youth services, to discuss the requirements for reinvigorating the work on youth policy in WA.

With YACWA's Fairground Conference in July, this discussion is set to continue, and we look forward to encouraging this state government to actively participate in the development of policies that will support young people throughout the years from 12 to 25. Readers may be interested to search online for Dave Turner's work around 'freedom's orphans'.

In a small victory, a decision



*Young Tasmanians from around the state listen to their politicians in the TYF Youth Election Forum.*

about the proposed stop and search legislation, which will not require police to have a 'suspicion' before searching people over the age of 16, has been postponed, as the committee is unable to reach an agreement.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### School and community partnerships

YAPA has conducted extensive consultations over the past year with school staff, representatives from the Department of Education (DET), youth workers, academics and young people about the role of school and community partnerships in

supporting young people as they navigate their way through high school. We have collated the views of these stakeholders and developed a policy platform outlining a strategy for strengthening school and community partnerships in NSW. This provides a vision for the future, where schools and local youth and community services are supported at both a regional and state level to form partnerships that achieve positive and lasting outcomes for young people.

## TASMANIA

### Young people have their questions heard by the three

### major political parties in Tasmania

The Youth Network of Tasmania and Tasmanian Youth Forum, together with TASCOS's Our Island Our Voices, held their first election forum on Wednesday 24 February 2010 at Parliament House, Hobart. The event was held to give young Tasmanians the opportunity to have their voices heard on issues that are important to them.

The event was open to young people aged between 12 and 25 years, with 93 young people from across the state in attendance on the day. The interest in this event from young Tasmanians shows

that they are passionate about having their voices heard and learning about how they can have an impact on the decision-making in their community.

All young Tasmanians were invited to submit questions to the politicians before the event, and 22 questions were asked on the day. These questions covered many diverse issues including education, safety, transport, global warming, physical and sexual education, youth leadership and development and support of young people with higher needs.

Each politician was given the opportunity to answer every question, and the chance to answer first. Answers were limited to between 30 seconds and two minutes each. A copy of the questions and answers can be obtained by contacting tyf@ynot.org.au

## VICTORIA

Over the last few months, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria has been focused on advocacy around public space, young people and violence and bullying. In November last year, YACVic released the report *Sticks and stones and mobile phones: Bullying in the new millennium – outcomes of a forum on bullying and young people in Victoria*. Recommendations from this report later informed YACVic's submission to two parliamentary inquiries into violence and young people. As this is an election year in Victoria, and with the introduction of a new ministerial portfolio for 'Respect', law and order issues will continue to be a focus of YACVic's work this year.

YACVic has also been working closely with rural youth service representatives on the issue of advocacy for the rural youth sector/young people and is an active member of the Victorian Rural Youth Services Network (VRYSN) Steering Committee. YACVic is also working collaboratively with the Inner City Regional

Youth Affairs Network on a forum examining the topic of the role of youth services in supporting the educational engagement of 10- to 16-year-olds.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In April, YACSA was delighted to learn that it was the winner of a Child Rights Award from the National Children's and Youth Law Centre. YACSA won the award for the category Promoting the Rights of Children and Young People and was particularly congratulated for running a campaign on such a challenging topic.

YACSA recently sat on a steering group overseeing the implementation in South Australia of Information Sharing Guidelines (ISG), which have been operating out of the state's Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People. The ISG provide a framework for sharing information across government and non-government agencies and have been developed to provide workers with simple, clear guidance about how they can share information with each other in order to better support vulnerable children, young people and their families.

And on 11 March, YACSA was delighted to host, with the SA Youth Lobby and the United Nations Youth Association (SA Branch), its pre-election *Pizza and Politics* event. Five politicians, including representatives from the major parties, attended to be grilled by the young members from YACSA, the SA Youth Lobby and the United Nations Youth Association (SA Branch). This format was such a success that we will be repeating the event for the forthcoming federal election.

## AYAC

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition has employed its first permanent Executive Director, Andrew Cummings. Andrew has worked in young people's organi-

sations for over 20 years. His roles have included working with children and young people in care, adolescent and family support, and managing programs and organisations at local, regional, state-wide, national and international levels in Australia, the UK and Europe. His most recent roles include working as Executive Officer of the Settlement Council of Australia, and as a freelance trainer and consultant with organisations including the Australian Council for Children's and Youth Organisations and the Australian Childhood Foundation. He will commence with AYAC in June and be joined by our other permanent staff.

AYAC recently held its first Policy Advisory Council meeting. Twenty people from around Australia, representing a variety of youth-led organisations and youth advocacy organisations, met in Sydney to discuss AYAC's policy agenda and to brainstorm strategies for ensuring young people's issues are represented in the forthcoming federal election. Other work that AYAC has been engaged with includes advocating for a more youth-centred National Youth Strategy, and ensuring that the voice of the youth sector is included in a major research project of the Office for Youth, which is exploring the capacity-building needs of youth sector organisations in Australia.

## QUEENSLAND

YANQ is continuing research on the factors of success for young people in non-mainstream schooling ('flexi schools') and, in a major report to be launched in June 2010, will make recommendations on how these factors may be transferred to mainstream schools.

The *Youth sector in Queensland* report, which is the result of consultation and research into youth sector workforce issues undertaken in 2009, was released, and YANQ is currently undertaking a state-wide validation process.

The report provides a summary of the data gathered during the project, key themes that emerged and recommendations that can be used to inform skilling and workforce development initiatives. The report can be accessed via: [http://www.yanq.org.au/images/stories/Documents/youth\\_sector\\_report\\_2010.pdf](http://www.yanq.org.au/images/stories/Documents/youth_sector_report_2010.pdf)

YANQ has secured additional funding from Department of Education and Training to progress the recommendations of the *Youth sector in Queensland* report in the next 18 months. YANQ has also been working on a draft discussion paper titled *Values in youth work: A Murri perspective*. This discussion paper will be released for consultation in May 2010.

## ACT

The ACT Government Budget 2010–11 was released on 4 May and the Youth Coalition developed a comprehensive response for the youth sector. We were pleased to see some funding relating to initiatives for young people, particularly focusing on young people with disabilities, young people in out of home care, young people in detention, and multicultural young people. However, we were disappointed that community sector viability and workforce development were not addressed.

The Youth Coalition again promoted the National Youth Week Calendar in the ACT, and also coordinated several events, including:

- an expo in the centre of the city, which promoted young people and youth services
- a youth services expo in Bimberi Youth Justice Centre
- a Youth Homelessness Matters Day event in the city
- a youth participation-themed forum for youth workers.

For more information, contact the Youth Coalition on 02 6247 3540, [info@youthcoalition.net](mailto:info@youthcoalition.net) or [www.youthcoalition.net](http://www.youthcoalition.net)