

What young people? – the political invisibility of youth

Youth appear to have 'fallen off the radar' in social policy debate. With an election imminent, what does this mean for the future of young people and youth work in Australia? Three papers in this issue focus on interactions between youth and those who work with them, and between youth and governments, and society more generally. The topic of youth work will again be visited in the December issue of YSA.

Other challenging topics in the current issue are: violent teenage deaths, public space and rights, and teens in cyberspace.

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From personal to structural:

Towards critical change in youth work practice

by Victor Wong

Victor Wong argues that if the welfare and interests of youth are to be promoted, youth workers need to critically review their ideology and practice, and maintain and advocate youth work that is orientated towards the 'structural'.

The blind points of universalism, characterised by its concern for the majority, have to be addressed and tackled for fear that the 'diswelfare' suffered by young people of ethnic minority status, for example, may be further expanded.

'Up periscope':

The future for youth work in Australia

by Judith Bessant

What are the major challenges facing youth work in Australia in the future? Are they political, environmental, global, economic, professional or demographic? Judith Bessant discusses the possible impact of these factors on youth workers and on the young people this profession serves.

A basic challenge facing youth workers ... is how best to promote discussion about the significance of young people's civil status as a key determinant of policies that routinely override their basic rights.

Nonviolence as a framework for youth work practice

by Graeme Stuart

Graeme Stuart discusses key principles of nonviolence and presents a model of nonviolent youth work practice.

... youth workers are being urged to accept more controlling or punitive roles, such as ... controlling young people's use of public space and shopping centres.

Nonviolence offers youth workers a framework from which they can help create a more peaceful, just society, and develop work practices that challenge notions of coercion and control.

Violent teenage deaths:

Do they fit childhood or adult scenarios?

by Ruth Lawrence and Toby Fattore

Does the pattern of deaths from fatal assault in teenage years resemble the pattern of earlier childhood fatal assault, or is it the beginning of the pattern of fatal violence in adulthood? Ruth Lawrence and Toby Fattore discuss their research, which raises a number of related issues.

Despite media reporting of a 'gang' problem involving violence in public spaces, the vast majority of deaths (three-quarters) did not involve groups or gangs of young people.

Public space:

A rights-based approach

by Anna Copeland

More and more young people are being excluded or banned from shopping centres and malls. There is a lack of clarity about the legality of such measures. Using common law and human rights frameworks, Anna Copeland looks closely at the issue of moving young people on.

As the number and size of shopping centres and retail complexes grow, this uneasy interaction between shopping centre management, security and young people will continue to be problematic.

Teens in cyberspace:

Do they encounter friend or foe?

by Michele Fleming and Debra Rickwood

In this review of the literature, the authors investigate whether parents' fears about their children's use of the Internet are well founded or not.

To date, there is little but growing evidence that fears about safety as a result of contacts made online are also well-founded.

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