



Welcome!

This is the Policy Platform of the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia. It provides a blueprint to guide YACSA's advocacy work. Each policy position may be used by members, staff, students, politicians, the media and members of the public to determine a broad picture of YACSA's position on a range of youth affairs issues.

YACSA uses its policy platform as a starting point for all advocacy work we do, whether it's providing a formal submission to the government, issuing a media release, or speaking at an event. YACSA's policy platform is therefore broad and far-reaching, but it gives YACSA's general perspective on current youth affairs issues, a perspective which ultimately reflects the views and opinions of our members.

The platform is informed by members and stakeholders in the youth sector, who provide feedback and advice on current youth affairs issues and the advocacy commitments necessary to achieve positive change. With our members' help, we have endeavoured to make this policy platform as relevant to current youth affairs as we can.

However, given the breadth and depth of the issues affecting young people in South Australia, and the wealth of information available about those issues, there may be occasions throughout the Policy Platform where statistics are slightly out of date, or certain legislative changes YACSA calls for have already come into effect.

This does not change YACSA's general perspective on the particular issues contained within the Policy Platform – it is simply a by-product of YACSA's commitment to ensuring each issue is covered extensively and with an appropriate level of research.

In addition, YACSA is always pleased to receive feedback, intelligence and advice from the youth sector on policy issues. To that end, we urge you to share this document with others and welcome your participation in our ongoing work to translate the needs and aspirations of young people into action.

How to use this policy platform

In many ways, this policy platform also doubles as a set of fact-sheets. You may wish to start with a single policy position in an area of interest, and then refer to related policy positions as required. YACSA has also provided references and guides to seeking further information for each policy position. There are 32 policy positions in total, grouped under 7 areas:

- **Health and wellbeing**
- **Housing**
- **Legal, justice and safety**
- **Living, learning and working**
- **Young people**
- **Youth participation**
- **Youth sector**

All policy positions are available for downloading individually from YACSA's website at www.yacsa.com.au. We will also publish notifications on our website and inform our members when policy positions evolve or new ones are added.

I commend YACSA's policy platform to you.

Abby King

PRESIDENT

Youth Affairs Council of SA





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Alcohol and tobacco use

The media and broader community often focus on illicit drugs, particularly amphetamines and heroin, as a primary concern for young people. However, licit drugs such as alcohol and tobacco can cause significant health and other risks. Licit drugs are a part of everyday life, are usually viewed as socially acceptable, and are widely available in the community; however, they are also the most common source of drug-related harm.

The highest risk factors to young peoples' health stem from tobacco and alcohol use. 15 to 29 year olds as a population group are the heaviest tobacco users in South Australia.¹ Across Australia, 53% of young Indigenous people aged 18 to 24 years are daily smokers, compared with 28% of other Australian young people.² Tobacco use has an immediate debilitating effect on young people's physical fitness with associated respiratory risks, and continued use increases the chances of developing various ailments such as cancers, circulatory diseases and heart disease in adulthood.³ The community health sector has also long been concerned about the high rates of smoking amongst young parents.⁴ Young people are further made susceptible to tobacco-related harm through passive smoking, which commonly occurs through socialising and working in the hospitality industry.

A 2001 household survey found that 20% of young men and 17% of young women aged 14 to 17 identified as 'regular drinkers'. Of this group, 35% were drinking at levels that placed them at a high risk of injury in the short term. Figures for 'regular drinkers' rose to 57% of young men and 42% of young women in the 18 to 24 age group.⁵ Young people as a population group are particularly susceptible to alcohol-related harms, including risks to physical health and mental health and increased risks of road trauma and high-risk sexual behaviour. Studies have shown that young people, and particularly young men, are at greater risk of experiencing alcohol-related violence, both verbally and physically.⁶ Drink spiking and binge drinking have also been popularly identified as growing concerns in recent years, and these pose serious risk to personal safety as well as associated health and other risks. Recent evidence suggests that South Australian sexual assault support services have begun to see a considerable increase in drug or alcohol assisted sexual assaults as a result of drink spiking.⁷

YACSA is committed to:

- Supporting the implementation of non-smoking legislation
- Advocating for the provision of a range of peer support, mentoring and education models to assist in reducing and minimising alcohol and tobacco-related harms
- Encouraging the broad provision of community and youth-specific information about the harms associated with licit drugs
- Advocating for the inclusion of underage drinking offences through drug diversion programs
- Advocating that drink driving penalties include an assessment and counselling component
- Advocating for continued education campaigns regarding sporting clubs, sporting events and alcohol use, particularly focusing on issues relating to young people
- Advocating for the provision of subsidies substitution therapies, such as nicotine patches, for young people on low incomes
- Advocating for the establishment of youth-specific detoxification services in South Australia

¹ Department of Human Services 2001, *Statistical profile of children and young people*, Adelaide, p. 54.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003, *Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing*, Canberra, p. 342.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁴ Child and Youth Health 2005, *Butt out for baby: A resource for young parents, health and community workers*, Department of Human Services, Adelaide, p. 4.

⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003, *Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing*, Canberra, p. 202-204.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁷ YWCA of Adelaide 2004, Submission to the South Australian Government's women's health policy: Women's health reformed, YWCA, Adelaide, p. 10.



Alcohol and tobacco use

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Drug use
- Employment
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Road safety and transport
- Safety and violence
- Sexual health

Resources:

- Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy 2001: *Alcohol in Australia: Issues and strategies*, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Canberra.

Ratified by YACSA's Policy Council: 12 July 2005

Reviewed: 5 December 2006



Drug use

Young people use licit and illicit drugs (which include the non-medical use of medications or misuse of other substances such as inhalants) for the same reasons that other age populations do: to enjoy themselves, to socialise, to 'forget' about problems, to relax. However, for many people, youth is also a period of self-exploration in which experimentation with licit and illicit drugs is more common and, if misused, is also the period during which longer-term, heavier usage and mental or physical health problems commonly begin. For some young people experiencing mental health issues and, to a lesser extent, physical health issues, drugs may be used to self-medicate, and young people with mental health issues may be more likely to smoke, drink and use drugs.¹ When drug use becomes problematic for young people with mental health issues, the more complex issue of dual diagnosis may result.

Cannabis remains the most frequently used illicit drug for young people, with 32% of young people aged 18 to 24 having used it within the 12 months prior to being surveyed in 2001.² New South Wales data indicates that inhalants are also frequently used through activities such as chroming, huffing or choofing and petrol sniffing. A 1999 survey of secondary school students in New South Wales found that 24% of young people surveyed aged 12 to 14 years had used inhalants in the last 12 months, coupled with a further 13% of young people aged 15 to 17.³ The misuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications by young people is also of concern to the youth sector, although little data is available on this issue. The sector further reports growing numbers of young people contracting Hepatitis C, a common cause of which stems from sharing syringes to administer drugs intravenously.

50% of young people aged 14 to 24 surveyed nationally reported that they had access to cannabis, and around 20% had been offered amphetamines or ecstasy.⁴ While being readily available, however, a number of negative outcomes can result from regular drug use, including the disruption of young people's cognitive, social and emotional development, as well as physical ailments.⁵

YACSA acknowledges this, and contends that an emphasis on personal safety, social responsibility and informed choices are practical and effective approaches to drug use amongst young people.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating that responses to young people's illicit drug use are holistic, taking in the connections between drug use and wider issues such as mental and physical health issues, poverty, educational outcomes, unemployment, social and geographical isolation and homelessness
- Advocating for the provision of a broad range of responses appropriate to the diversity of youth populations, consistently underpinned by a harm minimisation approach
- Advocating for community-based interventions that provide education, support and rehabilitation structures for young people in response to drug use issues
- Advocating for resourcing to youth-friendly drug information and support services to facilitate their presence at major events, large dance parties, school-leaving celebrations, etc
- Advocating for the improved provision of accessible, youth-friendly programs providing clean needle and other injecting equipment, safe disposals and information, including in rural and regional areas
- Advocating for the provision of a range of peer support, mentoring and education models to assist in reducing and minimising drug-related harms
- Advocating for the establishment of a youth-specific detoxification service in South Australia

¹ Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 7, p. 24.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003, *Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing*, Canberra, p. 207.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 198.



Drug use

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Road safety and transport
- Safety and violence

Resources:

- Drug and Alcohol Services Council 2002, *Illegal drug use in South Australia 2002: A statistical overview*, Drug and Alcohol Services Council, Adelaide.

Ratified by YACSA's Policy Council: 12 July 2005

Reviewed: 5 December 2006



Mental health

Following accident and injury mental health issues are the most significant burden of disease for young people in South Australia.¹ The median age of onset for mental health issues occurs in young people under 25 years of age. 14% of young people experience a mental health issue before they turn 18; 27% experience onset between the ages of 18 and 24.² Most commonly, the mental health issues experienced by young people include depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance use problems, stress disorders and schizophrenia.³

Mental health issues also often underpin young people's risk taking behaviours, with the youth population being one of the largest population groups to commit acts of suicide and deliberate self harm. 14% of all deaths by suicide in 2001 were committed by young people aged 12 to 24 years.⁴

Young people, like the wider population, also experience a strong correlation between long term physical illness and the onset of mental health issues. The youth sector has in recent years reported a rise in young people dealing with issues surrounding grief and loss, gambling, and dual diagnosis, in which young people are experiencing both substance use and mental health problems simultaneously. The ongoing impact of previous separation and assimilation policies continues to manifest itself in mental health issues, particularly grief and loss, for Indigenous young people. Mental health issues also have a significant impact on the lives of young people when they are living with a family member affected by mental illness.

Despite the relatively high prevalence of mental health disorders in the community, resourcing to the mental health sector in South Australia has for some time been markedly low. However, more recent state budgets have seen positive initiatives in spending on mental health, which YACSA hopes will continue to be built upon in future budgets at both the state and federal levels. Specifically, YACSA seeks investment in mental health services dedicated to children and young people, who collectively comprise around 30% of the population.⁵ YACSA believes that a population approach to mental health programs and services for young people, coupled with continuum of care flexibility, is vital to achieving improved outcomes.

Young people experiencing mental health issues may also disengage from education, training and employment activities, sending them into a spiral of compounded disadvantage for which there is little 'joined-up' support. Accommodation options for young people who are experiencing mental health issues are of particular concern to the youth sector. Many young people who are unable to live independently or with family are housed through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), where their behaviours, while often due to mental health issues, may see them excluded from service and ultimately experiencing secondary homelessness. The youth sector has also long been concerned about the difficult transition many young people face when moving from adolescent to adult mental health services, as their age precludes them from accessing adolescent service.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for early intervention and prevention initiatives in recognition of the importance of the formative years in determining lifelong mental health and wellbeing
- Advocating that young people and their interests and concerns are central to individual mental health case planning
- Advocating for the active involvement of young people in designing, planning, implementing and evaluating youth mental health policy and service delivery frameworks
- Advocating for the appropriate funding of mental health and related services, both government and non-government, so that they may adequately meet consumer participation objectives and standards
- Advocating an interdepartmental approach to youth mental health, including education, employment, training and housing agencies and departments, among others
- Advocating for the provision of mental health awareness programs through schools to promote understanding of mental health issues, reduce stigma and discuss stress reduction strategies for young people
- Advocating for the provision of mental health information and services to families and carers of young people, and involving families and carers in care planning and delivery as appropriate

¹ Department of Human Services 2001, Statistical profile of children and young people, Adelaide, p. 29.

² Department of Human Services 2003, A social health atlas of young South Australians, 2nd edn., Adelaide, p. 6.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003, Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing, Canberra, p. 89.

⁴ Ibid., p. 108.

⁵ Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association 2003, Response to the draft Mental Health Plan 2003-2008, Adelaide, p. 6.



Mental health

- Advocating for the development of an all-hours youth-specific mental health crisis intervention service
- Supporting community based mental health programs and services for young people
- Advocating for the development and resourcing of a variety of culturally appropriate youth suicide prevention initiatives
- Advocating for the establishment of support and accommodation services for young people experiencing mental health issues
- Advocating for improved youth-specific inpatient facilities, including support for young people to transition out
- Advocating for increased support for appropriate service and program responses to assist young people in overcoming gambling issues
- Advocating for improved resourcing to mental health rehabilitation and recovery programs and services for young people
- Promoting initiatives which seek to encourage healthy body image, improve young people's knowledge of healthy lifestyles, reduce stress and increase self-esteem
- Advocating for the development and resourcing of peer support programs specific to a wide variety of youth populations
- Advocating for improved youth specific mental health services and support to young people in secure care
- Advocating for culturally appropriate mental health services and support to young asylum seekers and refugees both in detention and in the community
- Advocating for culturally appropriate supports to children of parents with a mental health issue
- Advocating for improved youth-specific mental health services regionally, including culturally appropriate supports for Indigenous young people
- Advocating for appropriate support and training to those who may in the course of their work be the first to identify that a young person has a mental health issue, such as youth workers, teachers, school counsellors, police officers and Centrelink staff
- Advocating for appropriate support and training to workers who may work with young people with mental health issues, such as residential care and secure care workers
- Advocating for the establishment of a framework to assist young people to make the transition from adolescent to adult mental health services while maintaining the independence of adolescent services
- Advocating for adequate funding for the operations of the non-government mental health peak body

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Art, sport, culture and recreation
- Drug use
- Education
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Physical health
- Relationships with others
- Road safety and transport
- Safety and violence
- Training

Resources:

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004, Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing, AIHW cat. no. PHE 50, Canberra.
- Mitchell, P. 2000, Valuing young lives: Evaluation of the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Youth Affairs Council of South Australia 2001, Beyond the revolving door: A model for improving support and accommodation for young people with mental health issues, Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Adelaide.

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Updated: 5 December 2006



Physical health

Young people are often considered to be in good health, compared to other population groups. Yet, youth is a time in which many health issues and health-altering behaviours begin, and which may go on to be experienced across the course of a lifetime. Young people's health and wellbeing issues are often complex and inter-related, and the health problems they experience are diverse and far-reaching. Poverty, lack of education, poor nutrition, food insecurity, inadequate housing and access to basic health services are broad factors that contribute to the health concerns that young people face.

The accessibility of Medicare for young people remains a key concern for the youth sector. Recent proposals regarding raising the age limit of holding an individual Medicare card to 16, and making Health Insurance Commission medical records accessible to the parents of young patients aged 16 and under may work against young people who want or need the advice and support of a health practitioner.

For both young men and women, issues relating to mental health and wellbeing comprise the largest burden of disease. Injury and disability as a result of road traffic accidents are also a major burden of disease; and for young women in particular, asthma is a prominent issue.¹ Among long-term health concerns for young people are respiratory conditions, eye conditions (including short-sightedness), and musculoskeletal problems.² Of increasing concern to health practitioners and workers in the youth sector is the issue of obesity in young people, coupled with declining fitness levels. These often foreshadow a variety of health and psychosocial issues, including diabetes, high blood pressure, some cancers, stroke and coronary heart disease. Studies in the United Kingdom have found that approximately 80% of obese young people become obese adults.³

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for improved access to a range of appropriate and affordable generalist, youth-specific and alternative health services for young people
- Advocating for young people's active involvement in decision-making processes about their health and health care during all levels of contact within the health system
- Advocating for the active involvement of young people, especially consumers, in the planning, delivery and evaluation of health services, programs and policies
- Advocating for and supporting strategic research, policy development and project funding to improve health outcomes for youth populations experiencing disadvantage
- Promoting healthy lifestyle programs for young people that advocate balanced diets, good nutrition, regular exercise and positive body image
- Advocating for improved access to a variety of sporting and recreational activities for all young people
- Supporting the networking of health agencies and building cross-sector partnerships that will improve co-ordination, collaboration and advocacy on youth issues and ensure holistic health service provision
- Advocating for data sharing between government and non-government services across the education, health, justice and housing sectors to identify and assist young people and families who are represented across these sectors and are in most need of support
- Advocating for the provision of appropriate information to young people about body piercing and tattooing, associated health risks and care instructions, so that they may make informed decisions
- Advocating for the introduction of minimum national industry standards and codes of practice to the body modification industry to minimise health risks

¹ Department of Human Services 2001, *Statistical profile of children and young people*, Adelaide, p. 29.

² Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Melbourne, ch. 6, p. 11.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003, *Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing*, Canberra, p. 229.



Physical health

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Art, sport, culture and recreation
- Drug use
- Education
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Mental health
- Public space, private space
- Road safety and transport
- Safety and violence

Resources:

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004, *Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing*, AIHW cat. no. PHE 50, Canberra.
- Tennant, S., Hetzel, D. and Glover, J. 2003, *A social health atlas of young South Australians*, Public Health Information Development Unit, Department of Human Services, Adelaide.

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Relationships with others

Young people's relationships with others who are important to them, such as family, friends, peers and partners, are paramount to their health and wellbeing, resilience and social development. Assisting young people to rebuild and maintain their relationships with those they value and who are a source of support to them is a key principle of youth work. A recent survey reports that mothers and fathers jointly are the most important people in a young person's life, followed by mothers, partners, friends and fathers.¹

YACSA recognises the central importance of the family in young people's emotional and psychosocial development, and also acknowledges that young people's families commonly comprise structures outside of the traditional 'nuclear' unit, including same-sex parents, young people as parents themselves, foster carers and families and 'created' families that may not be related by blood or marriage but are bound by supportive and committed relationships. We also acknowledge the support some parents provide to friends and peers of their own children. YACSA asserts young people's right to be safe and protected within the family.

Often as a result of unemployment, underemployment or study, many young people find themselves financially dependent upon their families at a time when they are seeking self-determination and autonomy, and this can create stress for both young people and their families. Youth wages and the impact of Centrelink policy, which considers some young people to be the financial dependents of their parent/s until the age of 25, have meant that many young people who are working and/or studying are unable to afford to live away from the family home.

Young people's relationships with their friends and peers are crucial elements of social, emotional and mental wellbeing. Friends are commonly cited as being the first people that young people turn to for support with problems or worries. It is vital for young people's wellbeing that they have friends that they can talk to, laugh with and trust. Similarly, young people's intimate relationships are often an integral part of their social development, and YACSA recognises the importance of caring and supportive personal relationships in young people's lives. Conversely, bullying, social exclusion and peer pressure by friends, peers, partners, family members and others in a young person's life can have a damaging effect on a young person's wellbeing and resilience, which may result in stress, mental health issues, vulnerability and physical harm. 88% of respondents to a recent South Australian youth survey reported having been bullied or harassed at school and 21.2% experienced bullying at home.²

YACSA acknowledges the significant role that wider support networks, often comprised of people that have a supportive relationship with a young person, such as a cultural worker, teacher, youth worker, religious worker, or family friend, have in young people's lives. YACSA also recognises that communities that value and involve young people make a great contribution towards their overall health and wellbeing, and their relationships with others.

YACSA is committed to:

- Acknowledging the importance of supportive relationships and emphasising that abusive relationships should not be tolerated
- Combating bullying in all its forms
- Supporting policies and strategies which strengthen families to meet the differing needs of family members
- Advocating for the resourcing of programs for parents of young people which focus on understanding young people in a social context and which increase conflict resolution and negotiation skills
- Advocating for the provision of educative programs focusing on caring and supportive intimate relationships and reducing relationship violence and bullying
- Advocating for the provision of a wide range of programs addressing bullying and associated issues for young people
- Promoting peer education, mentoring and peer support models as appropriate and effective mechanisms for working with young people

¹ The Advertiser 2005, Youth survey results 2005, Adelaide, p. 23.

² Ibid., p. 24.



Relationships with others

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Care and protection of children and young people
- Discrimination against young people
- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Political engagement
- Safety and violence
- Sexual health
- Youth participation

Resources:

- De Vaus, D. 2004, *Diversity and change in Australian families: Statistical profile*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

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Road safety and transport

Young people's use of the road has come under scrutiny in recent times, and with it has come an increased concern about the number of young people who are being injured and killed as a result of road accidents. In South Australia, road traffic accidents constitute the biggest burden of disease for young men aged 15 to 24, and they are a prominent burden of disease for young women in the same age bracket.¹ YACSA shares the concerns of the broader community about young people's road safety, but cautions against punitive responses that restrict young people's access to driving and that disproportionately disadvantage young people when the issue of road safety is a whole-of-community concern. Community attitudes and practices have a considerable effect on young people's driving behaviours such as speeding, driving under the influence and risk taking, and YACSA believes that shifts in road injury and fatality rates will only be achieved through whole-of-community attitudinal and behavioural change. Further, YACSA cautions against young people being specifically targeted through drug testing and anti-hoon driving initiatives.

YACSA contends that road safety initiatives such as licensing restrictions must be considered within the context of young people's lives and that of their communities, with the understanding that what may be proposed as solutions to road safety may in fact be precursors to considerable hardship and exclusion for young people. Moves to limit young people's access to driving can create barriers to employment, education, training and social activities, and may hinder young people's ability to participate in 'designated driver' arrangements with peers and others, issues which have particular impact in rural and regional communities.

Driving while under the influence remains a key concern for both the youth sector and the broader community. A national survey conducted in 2001 found that 27% of young men and 16% of young women aged 18 to 24 surveyed had driven a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, with figures rising to 39% of young men and 22% of young women who had driven while under the influence of other drugs.²

YACSA recognises that an inclusive, educative approach to driver training for young people has been found to be particularly successful in examining and where necessary changing attitudes, behaviours and practices which affect young people's safety on the road.

YACSA is concerned that, for many young people, second-hand vehicles are the only affordable option when purchasing their first car, unless a young person goes into debt by taking out a loan. In many instances, older, second-hand cars are not entirely roadworthy and may not protect young people as well as a newer model car in the event of an accident.

Access to affordable, safe, timely and interconnected public transport is a key socio-economic determinant of health and wellbeing for young people. YACSA acknowledges that young people are among the greatest users of public transport options in South Australia, and that transport services need to be further developed in order to facilitate young people's participation in their communities through employment, educational, recreational and social activities, especially for young people in outer metropolitan and regional communities.

YACSA is committed to:

- Promoting a collaborative inter-agency approach to road safety across government departments and agencies and non-government services
- Advocating that road safety initiatives focus on educative rather than punitive approaches
- Advocating that any road safety measures be grounded in relevant, local and extensive research following extensive consultation with key stakeholder groups
- Promoting young people, including rural young people, as an important stakeholder group in debates and consultations concerning road safety and road use
- Advocating for the establishment of culturally appropriate youth driver education programs in South Australia that focus on driver behaviours and attitudes and improve insight into factors that contribute to road accidents, including community-based and peer-education models
- Advocating for rewarding young drivers for having a good driving record, by offering incentives such as subsidies or discounts for undertaking further driver education programs; subsidised or discounted insurance options; and incentives for successfully completing driver education programs

¹ Department of Human Services 2001, *Statistical profile of children and young people*, Adelaide, p. 29.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003, *Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing*, Canberra, p. 209.



Road safety and transport

- Advocating for the development of a range of public transport services to meet the needs of young people, with an increase in times and locations as necessary, in consultation with young people
- Advocating for the concessions system to make public transport as affordable as possible for young people
- Advocating for safe, sealed and well-marked roads and bicycle lanes
- Advocating for young people's safety when using taxi services, including youth-friendly complaints and reporting mechanisms

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Discrimination against young people
- Drug use
- Education
- Employment
- Income and poverty
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Safety and violence
- Training

Resources:

- Currie, G., Gammie, F., Waingold, C., Paterson, D. and Vandersar, D. 2005, *Rural and regional young people and transport: Improving access to transport for young people in rural and regional Australia*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Canberra.
- Youth Network of Tasmania and Booz Allen Hamilton 2003, *Tasmanian youth transport strategy*, Office of Youth Affairs, Hobart.

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Sexual health

Sexuality is integral to all people, and plays an important part in identity formation for young people. By the final years of secondary schooling, the majority of young people have become sexually active. Research shows that for both young men and women, average age of first intercourse is 16 years.¹ It is therefore necessary for young people to have access to services, information and support which is respectful and understanding of sexual diversity. It is also important for young people to have opportunities to discuss and learn about sexuality, relationships and sexual health in safe, appropriate and informative settings which take account of young people's emotional development, cultural background and religious beliefs.

While YACSA recognises that schools can be an important source of sexual health and relationships education, we also acknowledge the importance of delivering sexual health and relationships programs outside of school settings, including through youth services, so that such information is accessible by young people not engaged with education.

As a consequence of lack of information and discussion, some young people experience sexually transmitted diseases, non-consensual sex, sexual assault, unplanned pregnancy, unsatisfying relationships and low self-esteem. Just over a quarter of school students in years 10 and 12 surveyed nationally in 2002 had experienced non-consensual sex at some time in their lives, most commonly because they had had too much to drink or had given in to pressure from a partner.² Half of all terminations of pregnancy in South Australia from 1997 to 1999 were for young women aged 15 to 24 years, and Australia-wide 54% of teenage pregnancies were terminated in 2000.³ Young people are also a significant population group that may be at risk of contracting common sexually transmitted infections. In South Australia in 2000, 60.1% of chlamydial infections and 52% of gonorrhoeal infections were contracted by young people under the age of 25. Around one in five notifications of Hepatitis B and C were for under 25 year olds.⁴

YACSA also recognises the importance of youth-specific and youth-friendly sexual health services delivered through primary health care services and youth services, particularly for young people in rural and remote areas. YACSA cautions against any proposals which seek to raise the age of individual Medicare card eligibility from the age of 15 years, or which seek to make young patients' individual medical records available to their parents, on the understanding that this may act as a disincentive for young people to seek out sexual health services.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for the provision of inclusive education and information programs on sexuality, safe sex practices, and relationships education that target sexually active and non-sexually active young people in culturally appropriate ways, both within schools and in other appropriate settings
- Advocating for the provision of contraceptive information, advice and services to young people in an appropriate, affordable and accessible manner
- Advocating for the adequate resourcing of a variety of youth-specific sexual health services for young people which are culturally appropriate and broadly accessible
- Advocating for the provision of appropriate youth-specific sexual health services for young people in outer metropolitan, regional and rural areas
- Advocating for increased support for accessible sexual assault support services to young people

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004, *Australia's health 2004*, Canberra, p. 11.

² Smith, A.; Agius, P.; Dyson, S.; Mitchell, A. and Pitts, M. 2003, *Secondary students and sexual health 2002: Results of the third national survey of Australian secondary students*, HIV/AIDS and sexual health, La Trobe University, p. 2.

³ Department of Human Services 2003, *A social health atlas of young South Australians*, 2nd edn., Adelaide, p. 276

⁴ Department of Human Services 2001, *Statistical profile of children and young people*, Adelaide, p. 51.



Sexual health

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Drug use
- Education
- Relationships with others
- Safety and violence

Resources:

- Smith, A., Agius, P., Dyson, S., Mitchell, A. and Pitts, M. 2003, *Secondary students and sexual health: Results of the third national survey of Australian secondary students, HIV/AIDS and sexual health*, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

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Homelessness is commonly recognised as comprising three types – primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary homelessness involves being, literally, ‘roofless’; secondary homelessness means being in temporary accommodation without the option for secure, long-term housing, and tertiary homelessness includes those living long-term in single rooms in private boarding houses.¹

Nationally, young people aged 12 to 18 years comprise 26% of the homeless population, and 19 to 24 year olds comprise a further 10%.² South Australian school census data indicates that 1,020 young secondary school students were experiencing homelessness in 2001,³ and statistics show that most young people have their first experience of homelessness while they are still at school.⁴ Young people may also experience homelessness within the context of their family’s experience of homelessness. Services are now beginning to see young clients who have never experienced living in secure, long-term housing. The youth sector overwhelmingly reports that there is already a great demand for homelessness services across the state, and that the demand will continue to grow. Almost a third of South Australian Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services are youth-specific, yet the demand for youth SAAP services is growing rapidly, with referrals now being made for younger and younger clients.

Young people may become homeless for a number of reasons, including abuse, domestic violence, parental separation and re-partnering, negative school experiences, a lack of emotional support, parental death or incarceration, mental health issues or experiences of loss and grief. ‘Coming out’ or being found out to be same-sex attracted, and the consequent stress at home or school may be the catalyst for some young people’s early home leaving.⁵ The high costs of the private rental market and the discrimination young people often face when seeking private rental accommodation can contribute to young people becoming homeless. Young people may also become homeless due to a lack of adequate care while under the guardianship of the Minister, or due to difficulties in transitioning out of care after they turn 18.

The implications for young people who are experiencing homelessness can be significant across many aspects of their lives. Many young people experiencing homelessness struggle to continue engagement in education and training activities, and may find it challenging to obtain and maintain employment. Overwhelmingly, young people experiencing homelessness find it increasingly difficult to access income support payments, and there are considerable issues associated with being breached by Centrelink as a result of having no fixed address. Mental health issues may also be more likely to occur in young people experiencing homelessness, and they may also be more likely to be subject to physical and sexual violence.⁶ Issues are compounded for young people living in rural and regional areas who lack access to support services and where there is a lack of housing options.

At a service level, crisis accommodation services funded through SAAP have long been concerned that as a safety net program, SAAP has become a ‘catch all’ for young people who also have complex needs, including disabilities and mental health issues. This has resulted in increasing pressure on SAAP services to meet the needs of clients whose issues are too complex to be adequately met within the crisis sector. YACSA acknowledges the necessity of ensuring that SAAP crisis accommodation is available to all homeless young people. There is also a need for SAAP to be integrated with other support services to ensure that appropriate and ongoing support is available to those with complex needs, and for there to be sustainable and appropriate housing and support options available to young people leaving SAAP services.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for a service response mix that includes community development, early intervention, family reconciliation (as appropriate) and continuity of care approaches coupled with a more short-term, acute crisis management approach

¹ Chamberlain, C. and MacKenzie, D. 2002, *Youth homelessness 2001*, RMIT University and Salvation Army, Melbourne, p. iii.

² Chamberlain, C. and MacKenzie, D. 2003, *Counting the homeless*, Cat. No. 2050.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, p. 4.

³ Chamberlain, C. and MacKenzie, D. 2002, *Youth homelessness 2001*, RMIT University and Salvation Army, Melbourne, p. iv.

⁴ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute 2003, *Project details*, www.ahuri.edu.au/general/project/display/dspProject.cfm?projectId=68

⁵ National Crime Prevention 1999, *Living rough: Preventing crime and victimisation among homeless young people*, National Crime Prevention, Canberra, p. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Homelessness

- Advocating for the provision of early intervention and prevention initiatives to assist and support young people and their families while they are still living together, as appropriate
- Advocating for an increase in youth-specific SAAP and crisis accommodation program services, particularly in rural and regional areas
- Advocating for the establishment of a supported accommodation service for young people experiencing mental health issues
- Advocating for the development and resourcing of appropriate alternative models for supported residential services for young people with complex needs
- Advocating for the provision of a range of supported, semi-supported and independent housing options for families with children, including young parents and young couples
- Advocating for the promotion and expansion of state and federal programs for young people that holistically redress homelessness and associated issues
- Advocating for increased rental assistance payments to assist young people to access safe, appropriate and affordable housing options
- Acknowledging the particular housing and support needs of young people leaving secure care and alternative care and advocating for the provision of a range of after-care services including transitional housing and support
- Advocating for the implementation of legislative guidelines regarding the process of transitioning to independence and provisions for after-care support for young people leaving the guardianship of the Minister
- Advocating for secure housing for homeless students, or those at risk of homelessness, to be established near educational facilities, to enable them to remain engaged in education and training
- Advocating that schools, TAFEs and other training providers adopt flexible approaches to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness
- Advocating for the development of a Youth Homelessness Advisory Council to the Minister for Housing, working in partnership with the SAAP, housing, youth and homelessness sectors
- Advocating for the central collation of youth homelessness statistics in South Australia
- Advocating for the provision of quality, accessible and affordable professional development and training opportunities for residential workers providing care and support to young people in residential facilities

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Care and protection of children and young people
- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Public space, private space
- Relationships with others
- Safety and violence

Resources:

- Chamberlain, C. and MacKenzie, D. 2002, *Youth homelessness 2001*, RMIT University and Salvation Army, Melbourne.

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Appropriate, stable, affordable and safe housing options for young people remain one of the highest priorities of the South Australian youth sector. Making the move to independent living is an important milestone in a young person's life, and it is often marked by the move into a place of one's own. For some young people this will be their first experience of living away from their families and all the support that entails; for others, it may mean an escape from a difficult family situation, or the first step out of care or supported accommodation.

Recent research shows that 12.3% of young single households in South Australia aged 21 to 25 are in after-housing poverty – that is, after the cost of their housing is taken into consideration, their remaining income placed them below the poverty line. This is well above the national average of 8.1%,¹ an issue that is exacerbated by increasing rental costs without a corresponding rise in rental support concessions. Without stable accommodation, low-income young people are at risk of being breached, with income support payments reduced or cut off for a period of time if they do not receive and thus respond to Centrelink correspondence. A lack of housing stability can also be financially draining if young people are moving from residence to residence, having to pay for utility reconnections and moving costs, and it can impact heavily on health issues, especially mental health issues. Indigenous young people face increased social disadvantage in attempting to secure affordable, appropriate and safe housing.²

The private rental market is by far the preferred housing choice for young people, yet they continue to report discrimination in their attempts to access privately owned housing, particularly as landlords and real-estate agents frequently question young people's ability to meet rental obligations. Assumptions about young people's lifestyles that may affect their tenancies, such as noise, number of occupants, rent arrears and neighbour complaints, may be contributing factors to the likelihood of discrimination. Young people under 18 years are not old enough to sign a lease. Share housing arrangements, while common, can also be problematic for young people, who may risk being left with bad tenancy records or debts incurred by a previous housemate. Housemates who are not named on the lease currently remain unprotected by the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

Social housing options, including public housing, Aboriginal housing and community housing, are important housing alternatives for young people, although in all instances waiting lists to access housing can be considerable. The South Australian Housing Trust reports that there were 5,586 young people under 25 years waiting for public housing as of 30 June 2004, making up 21.8% of the total waiting list.³ In the face of such housing need, YACSA considers it impractical to continue the sell-off of public housing stock. A small number of South Australian housing co-operatives are currently set up for and being managed by young people, and these can also be a viable option for young people who are community-minded and seeking to be engaged in the housing management process.

Young people are increasingly less likely to buy their own homes. Nationally, young people under 25 comprise 4% of all home owners, and the decreasing rates are likely to be influenced by income support dependency while studying or training, reduced job stability, and debts incurred through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), amongst others.⁴

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for young people's right to safe, secure, affordable housing
- Advocating for improved accessibility and a greater range of affordable housing options for young people
- Advocating for an improved mix of youth housing services including semi-supported and independent living options
- Advocating for the provision of a range of secure, affordable student housing options for students who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, on low incomes, or who have to relocate for study purposes, including options for international students
- Advocating for the identification and promotion of best practice models of youth housing
- Advocating for a strong commitment from federal and state governments to improving housing outcomes for young people through a well-resourced Commonwealth State and Territory Housing Agreement

¹ Carson, E. and Martin, S. 2001, *Social disadvantage in South Australia*, University of South Australia and South Australian Council of Social Services, Adelaide, p. 12.

² Winter, I. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, pers. comm., 1 April 2005.

³ South Australian Housing Trust 2004, *Trust in focus 2003-2004*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, p. 8.

⁴ Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 4, p. 26, 28.



Housing

- Advocating for the reinstatement of rent relief payments and incremental increases to the South Australian Housing Trust's Direct Lease scheme
- Advocating for the establishment of an independent tenants' advocacy and information service, with at least one officer dedicated to working with young people
- Advocating for adequate legal protection for young people's security as tenants in the public, private and community housing sectors
- Advocating for the provision of necessary support networks to assist young people with disabilities, including mental health issues, to maintain their housing
- Advocating that programs designed to assist young people in transitioning from school to training, further education or employment also consider other life transitions occurring concurrently for young people, including transitioning to living independently
- Advocating for the establishment of support and practical assistance programs to assist young people to make the transition from the guardianship of the Minister or a Supported Accommodation Assistance Program into private rental housing
- Advocating for the development of education programs for young people focusing on independent living skills and the rights and responsibilities of tenants
- Encouraging the development and promotion of strategies to reduce the number of young people in unsuitable or unstable housing arrangements, including share housing
- Advocating for improved provision and promotion of public and community housing options to young people, including those experiencing homelessness
- Advocating for low interest mortgage options to be developed to assist low income young people to purchase their own home
- Advocating for the inclusion of housing support services for young people as an integral component of the provision of public housing, in tandem with relationship building between the South Australian Housing Trust regional offices and local youth workers and agencies
- Advocating for data sharing between government and non-government services across the education, health, justice and housing sectors to identify and assist young people and families who are represented across these sectors and are in most need of support

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Discrimination against young people
- Education
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Income and poverty
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Relationships with others
- Safety and violence

Resources:

- Shelter SA 2000, *Round my place: Examining the experiences of young people in the private rental market in South Australia*, Adelaide.

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Care and protection of children and young people

Child protection has received considerable government and community sector attention in recent years, culminating in the child protection review undertaken by Robyn Layton QC in 2002.¹ The issue of child protection is a central one for the youth sector, despite the fact that often much of the debate concentrates on very young children, sometimes to the exclusion of young people's issues and experiences. Yet older young people in the care and protection system have often been subject to considerable instability, experiencing a lack of continuity in parenting, education, training, friendships and support networks, which can exacerbate the issues that may have led to their involvement in the care and protection system.²

South Australia has for some time suffered from a lack of available foster carers, including Indigenous carers, partly due to the limited financial and other supports available, the increasing complexity of providing care and demographic changes impacting upon the pool of available foster carers in the community. This has had a considerable impact on young people in care, resulting in, amongst other things, a growing number of short-term care placements. It may also be harder to place a young person with a foster carer, with evidence indicating that many more carers are registered to care for infants and younger children than young people over the age of 12.

Indigenous children and young people are consistently over-represented in the care and protection system, which may be due to lower socio-economic conditions and the continued effects of previous cultural and familial separation policies.³ Indigenous families may also be more subject to closer scrutiny and intervention practices than non-Indigenous families.⁴ In South Australia, Indigenous children and young people are more than eight times more likely than other children to come to the attention of child protection authorities.⁵

At present there are no specific legislative obligations for the state to make provisions for young people leaving care in South Australia. At a systems level, support for young people leaving care is minimal and often uncoordinated. This is further exacerbated by a lack of affordable and accessible housing for young people. Leaving care is often a vulnerable time for many young people, and without adequate planning and support a number of issues may arise, such as early school leaving, unemployment, income support dependence, homelessness or housing instability, and early (and often unplanned) parenthood.⁶

YACSA further contends that children and young people who are seeking asylum in Australia and who are being held in immigration detention centres are not having their care and protection needs met, in violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

YACSA is committed to:

- Promoting the principle that the best interests of children and young people should be the paramount consideration in child protection legislation
- Advocating for the statutory establishment of a strong, independent child and youth advocacy structure in South Australia, centring around a Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Advocating for direct support for children and young people in Family Care Meetings through the appointment of trained advocates
- Promoting practice approaches that seek to keep siblings together wherever possible, as appropriate
- Promoting the use of specialised care and protection interventions for Indigenous and CALD young people
- Advocating for the full implementation of strategies within Keeping Them Safe, the State Government's child protection plan
- Advocating that funding for early intervention and prevention approaches through the care and protection system, as well as out of home care, are allocated equitably between child and youth population groups
- Advocating for the appropriate funding and resourcing of Families SA and other child protection agencies to meet demand, as well as improved staffing numbers and training requirements to enable the provision of child protection services

¹ Layton, R.A., 2003, *Our best investment: A State plan to protect and advance the interests of children*, Department of Human Services, Adelaide.

² Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 5, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, ch. 5, p. 8, 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 5, p. 13.

⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2005, *Child protection Australia 2003-04*, *Child welfare series no. 36*, AIHW cat. no. CWS 24, Canberra, p. 22.

⁶ Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 5, p. 3.



Care and protection of children and young people

- Advocating for the implementation of legislative guidelines regarding the process of transitioning to independence and provisions for after-care support
- Encouraging the development of formalised background checks for all workers and volunteers with children and young people
- Advocating for a range of housing options for young people who are experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough, coupled with appropriate care and protection responses for those who are in such situations due to experiences of abuse and neglect
- Advocating for the enforcement of legal provisions which encompass youth homelessness as a care and protection issue necessitating an adequate response from the state

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Education
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Public space, private space
- Relationships with others
- Safety and violence
- Young people in care
- Young refugees and asylum seekers

Resources:

- Department for Families and Communities 2004, *Keeping them safe: The South Australian Government's child protection reform program*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide.
- Layton, R.A., 2003, *Our best investment: A State plan to protect and advance the interests of children*, Department of Human Services, Adelaide.
- Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People 2006, *Charter of rights for children and young people in care*, Department of Families and Communities, Adelaide.
- Semple, D. 2002, *Review of alternative care in South Australia*, Des Semple and Associates, Adelaide.

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Discrimination against young people

Young people experience discrimination in many forms. Discrimination may occur based on young people's age, their race, their gender, sexuality, religion; their physical or mental ability; their national or ethnic origin; their sex, pregnancy, parental or marital status; their economic circumstances or some other ascribed characteristic.

YACSA acknowledges the difference between embracing diversity and eliminating discrimination, although we note that the two are interrelated. Discrimination is generally defined as being any activity in which a person is denied the opportunity to participate freely and fully in usual day-to-day activities. Discrimination can be direct or indirect, and both forms can have profoundly negative impacts. Direct discrimination is relatively visible and thus is easier to tackle; indirect discrimination is more subtle and may be harder to identify – for example, talking about links between ethnicity and terrorism. Indirect biases can be entrenched or systematic and seen as 'normal'; actions may not even be perceived to be biased. Discrimination may affect young people socially, financially, emotionally, physically and mentally, and can create barriers to their participation in community life and in decision-making processes. For young people of diverse backgrounds, discrimination based on their background is complicated by the fact that they are young. Challenging discrimination will require cultural and attitudinal changes across society.

YACSA recognises that in order to equally exercise their citizenship rights, some groups in society, such as young people, require specific measures or provisions to be put in place to avoid discrimination and disadvantage. This is consistent with both the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Political Rights, to which Australia is also a signatory.

YACSA is committed to:

- Valuing and respecting the diversity of young people and young people's experiences
- Advocating against any form of discrimination negatively affecting young people both in the public and private sector
- Combating discrimination in all its forms and promoting culturally and developmentally appropriate avenues in which all young people may be involved in decision-making processes
- Promoting awareness and understanding of religious and spiritual diversity, recognising that diversity embraces the freedom of religious and spiritual belief
- Encouraging youth research, policy and program activities that actively engage with cultural diversity issues and are inclusive of, and beneficial to, diverse youth population groups
- Advocating for the adjustment of legislative inconsistencies across government portfolios regarding when a young person is to be considered an adult
- Advocating for a variety of avenues for young people's concerns and complaints to be heard and actioned, such as a Commissioner for Children and Young People, youth advocates within the Employee Ombudsman and the Health and Community Services Complaints Commission, and youth advocates within an independent tenant's advocacy and information service

For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Education
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Political engagement
- Public space, private space
- Relationships with others
- Safety and violence



Discrimination against young people

- Sexual health
- Training
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000, *Age matters: A report on age discrimination*, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney.
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1989, *Convention on the rights of the child*, United Nations, www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm

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Justice and legal issues for young people

Young people are one of the most socially-controlled population groups, and the idea of young people as a menace to social order, as a group that need to be monitored and managed, is not a new one.¹ YACSA has for some time, however, been disturbed by the increasingly strident tone of the law and order debate in South Australia, and while many 'getting tough on crime' campaigns focus on older offenders, young people are often included, sometimes without foundation. In many instances such 'tough stances' are in part motivated by media activity about young people and crime, such as tabloid reporting and talkback radio, which sometimes misinterpret youth offending statistics. Media-fuelled community concerns about youth gangs, graffiti artists, 'youth crime waves' in lower socio-economic areas and dangerous young drivers can therefore lead to punitive responses, such as calls for youth curfews, greater restrictions on young people's personal freedoms, and arguments for trying more young people as adults.

The day-to-day realities of many young people experiencing disadvantage span wider than the juvenile justice system, encompassing physical and mental health issues, educational issues, care and protection issues and drug and alcohol issues, all of which (and many more) impact upon their lives and in turn upon the likelihood of their coming into contact with the juvenile justice system; although YACSA notes that offending behaviours are not predicated upon the experience of disadvantage. Further, young people may also come under increased surveillance and intervention from police and others in the community seeking to deter them from possible criminal activity.

Indigenous young people remain over-represented in all aspects of the juvenile justice and adult correctional system. Nationally, Indigenous young people aged 10 to 17 are almost 20 times more likely to be in detention than non-Indigenous young people of the same age.² In the South Australian adult correctional system, Indigenous people constitute 17% of the population, despite comprising 1.49% of the South Australian adult population. 95% of Indigenous people in the adult correctional system in South Australia have previously been involved with the juvenile justice system.³ For many Indigenous young people, detention in police custody or secure care is especially painful, and reminiscent of past separation and removal policies.

Human rights instruments are clear about the necessity of diversionary options for young people who have offended, and South Australia has specifically legislated for it. It is crucial that an effective system makes the best use of diversionary options available in the interests of minimising stigma and diminishing the chances of young people establishing a cycle of offending. This also recognises that most offending committed by young people is transitory, with the vast majority of young people maturing out of criminal behaviour.⁴

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for the provision of adequate resourcing and support for crime prevention programs and strategies, including community development initiatives aiming to address the social causes of much offending behaviour
- Advocating for young people, workers in the justice and youth sectors and the general public to be informed about South Australia's juvenile justice system, its principles and processes, as well as young people's legal rights and responsibilities, including what will be recorded and made accessible on a young person's police record
- Advocating for the establishment of a state juvenile justice agency to facilitate a joined-up, cross-government approach to juvenile justice, as well as working with relevant non-government organisations
- Advocating to maintain the current age criteria of 10 to 18 years for juvenile justice structures in keeping with the relevant human rights instruments pertaining to young people and juvenile justice, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice
- Promoting the maintenance of the principle of individual (compared with general) deterrence in the sentencing practices of the Youth Court

¹ Bessant, J. and Hil, R. 1997, Youth, crime and the media: Media representation of and reaction to young people in relation to law and order, National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Hobart, p. 1, 3.

² Australian Institute of Criminology, Crime facts info, no. 87, 14 December 2004, Canberra, p. 1.

³ Department of State Aboriginal Affairs 2002, Aboriginal people and drug use: An issues paper, Adelaide, p. 5.

⁴ Wilson, P. R. 1990, Opening address: Youth crime prevention, towards creative strategies, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, www.aic.gov.au/publications/youth-crime/opening.pdf



Justice and legal issues for young people

- Advocating that the identities of young people who have offended be kept private in keeping with international human rights instruments
- Encouraging closer scrutiny of sentencing practices, including the efficacy of community service orders and home detention
- Advocating for adequate resourcing and support for special support programs such as in-custody and post-release education and training programs for young people who have offended
- Advocating for the improvement of conditions within South Australia's youth training centres
- Advocating for improved pre-release planning for young people in secure care, including providing a range of affordable and accessible housing options
- Supporting the implementation and updating (as necessary) of SAPOL's Police Youth Policy
- Advocating for specific, dedicated youth training programs for police, legal professionals and magistrates focusing on youth issues and working with young people, including youth cultural diversity training
- Encouraging the promotion and provision of statistics regarding young people and offending in South Australia to members of the media, the public and policy makers
- Encouraging accurate, professional and balanced reporting on youth specific issues, including justice and employment issues, in the mainstream media
- Advocating for data sharing between government and non-government services across the education, health, justice and housing sectors to identify and assist young people and families who are represented across these sectors and are in most need of support
- Advocating for the resourcing and expansion of the Aboriginal Youth Sentencing Court
- Advocating for the support and expansion of the Children's and Youth Legal Service in South Australia
- Advocating for support and resourcing to legal advisory and support services to provide specialised assistance to Indigenous young people and CALD young people

For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Care and protection of children and young people
- Discrimination against young people
- Drug use
- Education
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Public space, private space
- Road safety and transport
- Safety and violence

Resources:

- Office of Crime Statistics and Research 2004, *Crime and justice in South Australia 2003: Juvenile justice*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide.

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Public space, private space

YACSA recognises the social importance of public space to young people and supports their right to free and unhindered access to public space regardless of their economic status and age. However, we remain concerned that young people's right to lawfully use public space, as well as privately owned spaces such as suburban shopping complexes and the city centre, is under threat. The youth sector has long been aware that young people's use of public space is being monitored and regulated, and that the commercial interests of retail traders are encroaching on the rights of young people, particularly so for young people who experience social disadvantage due to their culture, language, identity, economic situation or ability. Anecdotal evidence suggests that young people are also closely monitored where they are congregated for large events, such as when leaving the Royal Show or the Big Day Out, as well as for activities such as street protests.

YACSA also recognises that young people spend time socialising in privately owned spaces such as shopping centres, food courts and malls, and that such places are often viewed by young people as being relatively safe, as well as places where there is activity. They may also use these spaces due to a lack of other options. Young people in privately owned spaces are often viewed as being a problem, however; particularly if they are not making purchases. Young people themselves frequently report being treated poorly or unfairly by security and centre managers.

Further, YACSA does not support the concept of youth curfews, which have again been attracting interest and support in recent years. Curfews are not consistent with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and can unfairly target young people on the basis of age and often on the basis of race and gender. YACSA also contends that any attempts to restrict access to the streets late at night would be difficult to enforce and potentially create hostility between police and young people, and notes that police already have extensive powers to intervene, or to call in care and protection authorities as necessary.

YACSA is committed to:

- Promoting young people's legitimate right to use and enjoy public space, as well as the social importance of public space to the whole community, including young people
- Encouraging a diverse range of free and low-cost recreation and leisure options for young people
- Involving young people in decision-making processes regarding public space design and use
- Promoting environmental crime prevention strategies to create safe public spaces
- Advocating that police 'move on' powers are balanced and practiced appropriately
- Advocating for clear checks and balances to provisions allowing police to remove children and young people in imminent danger from public places
- Working with security personnel, retail traders and shopping centre managers and police to build relationships, prepare protocol and provide advice, information and educative support regarding young people's use of public and private spaces
- Advocating for a range of housing options for young people who are experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough, coupled with appropriate care and protection responses for those who are in such situations due to experiences of abuse and neglect



Public space, private space

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Care and protection of children and young people
- Discrimination against young people
- Homelessness
- Income and poverty
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Safety and violence

Resources:

- National Crime Prevention 1999, *Hanging out: Negotiating young people's use of public space*, Attorney-General's Department, Barton.
- South Australian Police 2001, *Police youth policy: Police and young people sharing the state's future*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, www.sapolice.sa.gov.au

Ratified by YACSA's Policy Council: 12 July 2005

Reviewed 5 December 2006



Safety and violence

Violence, whether it occurs in a family setting or in other places such as on the street, in intimate relationships and friendships, or as a tactic of bullying, is an unfortunate but all too common experience in many young people's lives. Violence can take many forms: overtly, it may be in the form of physical acts against a person such as slapping, hitting, kicking or punching. However, violence can also be perpetrated against people verbally and emotionally, by behaving in ways that are intimidating or menacing, or by making insults or threats. Violence can also be implied, such as violent gestures towards inanimate objects. Witnessing or experiencing violence may cause emotional or psychological harm, physical injury and fatality. In recent times, the youth sector has also become aware of the use of information technologies such as email, instant messaging, voice mail and SMS text messaging to threaten and bully young people.

Community concerns about young people perpetrating violence often do not take into account that young people are themselves the largest discrete population group being victimised by crime. Young people aged 14 to 24 accounted for 34% of all victims of personal offences (excluding sexual offences) in South Australia in 2003.¹

Domestic violence issues are often, by extension, child protection issues. Young people may be the victims of violence themselves, or may be affected by domestic violence through witnessing violence and the threat of violence or by trying to intervene to protect a parent from violence. In some instances, young people may also be the perpetrators of violence within families, particularly so when an intimidating home environment has become the norm.

Relationship or dating violence most commonly affects young people, and around half of all 19 and 20 year olds participating in a national survey in 2000 had experienced at least one act of relationship violence, with 14% of young women and 7% of young men reporting that their partner had tried to force them to have sex.² Young people, especially young women, are a high risk population group with regard to sexual violence. In 2003, young South Australians aged 14 to 17 accounted for 23% of all victims of sexual offences, such as rape and indecent assault,³ and Australia-wide young women aged 15 to 17 are three times more likely to be sexually assaulted than all other women.⁴

Research shows that young people respond well to early intervention and prevention programs based on the peer education model, and YACSA supports this approach in working with young people to prevent violence. Key to reducing violence is to illustrate that it is unacceptable within society, including a young person's peer group, culture, community or support network, and to encourage help seeking behaviour.

YACSA is committed to:

- Promoting young people's right to safety and protection, wherever they are and whomever they are with
- Promoting young people's safety, security and confidence in reporting violence of all kinds
- Encouraging consistent actions from police and support services in response to reports of violence from young people
- Advocating for the adequate resourcing of programs which address young people's experiences of being victims of or witnesses to family violence
- Advocating for appropriate resourcing and support for violence prevention programs, particularly those which take a peer education approach
- Promoting the provision of up-to-date and appropriate information to young people regarding individual rights, types of violence and responses and support strategies regarding witnessing or experiencing violence
- Involving young people in decision-making processes regarding public space design and use
- Promoting environmental crime prevention and urban planning strategies which create safe public spaces
- Advocating for the inclusion within school curricula of education about bullying, harassment and young people's rights in relation to these issues at work, at school and in public places

¹ Office of Crime Statistics and Research 2004, *Crime and justice in South Australia 2003: Offences reported to police, the victims and alleged perpetrators, a statistical report*, Attorney-General's Department, Adelaide, p. 83.

² National Crime Prevention 2000, *Young people and domestic violence: National research on young people's attitudes and experiences of domestic violence*, Attorney-General's Department, Barton, p. xvi.

³ Office of Crime Statistics and Research 2004, *Crime and justice in South Australia 2003: Offences reported to police, the victims and alleged perpetrators, a statistical report*, Attorney-General's Department, Adelaide, p. 87.

⁴ Department of Human Services 2000, *Women's health and wellbeing: Consultation paper*, Department of Human Services, Adelaide, p. 18.



Safety and violence

- Advocating for the full implementation of strategies within Keeping Them Safe, the state government's child protection plan
- Advocating for improved education and support for workers with young people focusing on mandatory notification requirements and responsibilities
- Encouraging the development of a public transport safety strategy which focuses on improving young people's capacity to be and feel safe
- Supporting initiatives by government, non-government organisations, police and transport agencies which maximise safe travel for young people

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Care and protection of children and young people
- Discrimination against young people
- Drug use
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Public space, private space
- Relationships with others
- Road safety and transport
- Sexual health

Resources:

- National Crime Prevention 2000, *Young people and domestic violence: National research on young people's attitudes and experiences of domestic violence*, Attorney-General's Department, Barton.

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Education

The education system is a fundamental environment for young people in terms of social, cultural, vocational, ethical and intellectual development, and it sets the foundation for continued learning throughout the lifespan. It is imperative that every opportunity be taken to make the system responsive to students' varying needs, especially so during young people's formative years. Making education relevant and responsive to the interests and issues facing young people is a crucial cornerstone to ensuring that young people move through secondary schooling to further education, training or employment options.

Yet, many young people are not being adequately served by the school system. This concern is strongly reflected in the growing demand for a diverse range of alternative education options, flexibly delivered, through which young people are individually supported to undertake and maintain their learning. YACSA believes that alternative education options should be made available to young people on the basis of their informed choice, rather than as a behaviour management strategy.

Efforts have been made in recent times to improve South Australia's school retention rates, with 2002 statistics indicating that around 70.6% of full-time Year 10 students stay on to Year 12.¹ However, 2001 research found that Indigenous students are still less likely than all other students to stay on at school past the minimum school leaving age.² Studies suggest that young people may leave school early for two main reasons: a fear of failing at school if they continue; or in the hopes of finding employment.³

YACSA commends efforts in recent years for schools to partner with local services and community agencies to promote an holistic approach to education and learning in order to address retention and participation issues more fully. However, there continues to be a strong need to fund non-government services appropriately to allow them to partner effectively with schools in serving young people.

Schools continue to be a common site for bullying of young people, which frequently affects young people's health and wellbeing. While bullies are usually identified as being other young people, anecdotal evidence from the youth sector indicates that young people are also experiencing incidences of bullying and intimidation by teachers and other school staff. Similarly, homophobia remains an issue in many schools. National research has shown that around half of same-sex attracted young people aged 14 to 18 experience homophobic bullying and abuse; around 70% of this occurs in schools, largely at the hands of other students. In many instances, school is a more common site for homophobic bullying than the street is.⁴ YACSA contends that for these (and many other) reasons, the employment of youth workers in schools is an important strategy in supporting and engaging young people in learning.

YACSA is committed to:

- Promoting relevant, diverse and inclusive curricula for all school students
- Encouraging safe and supportive school environments which enhance all levels of academic and social development
- Ensuring that school environments celebrate diversity and positive, healthy social interaction, and that they adopt inclusive structures to counteract all forms of discrimination
- Encouraging the appropriate use of the education system to provide information about issues of importance to young people, including sexual health and relationships, drug and alcohol harm minimisation and mental health
- Encouraging schools to develop anti-bullying and anti-homophobia strategies, including training for teachers and education workers, and curricula for students
- Advocating for the support and resourcing of a variety of alternative education options through schools and the youth sector to cater to a range of learning capacities
- Advocating for a range of options and support mechanisms within the education system to address the different needs of young people, including the delivery of flexible learning programs for students to attend part-time or return after time away from school

¹ Department of Health 2004, *Inequality in South Australia: Key determinants of wellbeing*, vol. 1: The evidence, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, p. 37.

² Ibid., p. 37.

³ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴ Hillier, et. al. 1998, cited in Klein, T and Simmons, N. 2001, *Homophobia: Get over it!*, Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, Brisbane, p. 11.



Education

- Advocating for a variety of accessible pathways to training, further education and tertiary education options
- Encouraging the development of a range of student participation strategies in all schools
- Encouraging schools to involve parents, families and caregivers in the day-to-day education of young people
- Encouraging the local community to take an active role in schools
- Supporting partnerships between schools and the youth and community sectors to meet the diverse needs of students
- Promoting realistic school retention rates based on catering for and supporting student needs
- Advocating for the minimum school leaving age to be stabilised at 16 years, in recognition of young people's growing autonomy and the needs of some to take up post-school training, education or employment options
- Encouraging alternative discipline systems that do not lead to young people being excluded and/or suspended from schools
- Encouraging support for 'return to industry' placements for teachers to ensure that they are skilled and knowledgeable about industry and employer needs
- Promoting appropriate data sharing between government and non-government services across the education, health, justice and housing sectors to identify and assist young people and families who are represented across these sectors and are in most need of support
- Promoting a national policy of free education for all undergraduate courses in all universities, TAFE institutes and other post-secondary education settings
- Advocating that entry requirements to all tertiary degree and diploma courses at undergraduate level to be based on academic merit, recognition of prior experience and learning and access and equity principles, rather than on the ability to pay full-fees
- Advocating for government provision of student support services to replace those lost through voluntary student unionism (VSU)

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Care and protection of children and young people
- Discrimination against young people
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Relationships with others
- Safety and violence
- Sexual health
- Training
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Secondary Schools Assessment Board of South Australia 1999, *Leaving school early without credentials: As many reasons as students*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide.

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Employment

Young people's ability to secure suitable employment is one of the most pressing issues facing the youth sector currently. In South Australia, levels of full-time unemployment encountered by young people are routinely amongst the worst in the nation. Young people who are experiencing social disadvantage in its many forms often face increased challenges in securing suitable employment, which in turn increases a young person's chance of experiencing longer-term disadvantage.¹ The effects of intergenerational unemployment have also begun to have a negative impact on young people in South Australia.

Full-time entry-level positions for graduates and school-leavers, which were once an important feature of the labour market, have sharply declined in number. The majority of employment growth is now in part-time and casual employment.² This has given rise to a new concern for young people, who are increasingly experiencing the often hidden issue of under-employment, in which workers are employed for fewer hours or in less desirable jobs than they would prefer and are qualified for. The sector is regularly reporting a rise in casual employment in place of full-time and part-time employment, which largely leaves young people in unstable jobs with no superannuation and leave entitlements. Casual work is often linked with reduced quality training and development opportunities, and diminished access to unfair dismissal and equal opportunity protections. Lack of access to paid leave when necessary can also have strong impacts on young people's physical and emotional wellbeing.

YACSA remains concerned about the complex and interwoven issues affecting young people experiencing unemployment, particularly in the long term, with marked decreases in their general social health and wellbeing now a common outcome. For those who are employed, perennial issues regarding poor working conditions, little to no attention to occupational health and safety regulations and workplace bullying too often still persist. 13.6% of respondents to a recent South Australian youth survey reported having experienced bullying at work.³ The sector also reports that some workplaces do not take the time required to train young employees adequately in their roles, and young workers are often largely uninformed as to what their rights are and discouraged from seeking information about these from unions.

Of continuing concern to the youth sector is the maintenance of youth or junior wages, which leave young workers more vulnerable to exploitation by employers and which generally have not been found to lead to secure, full-time employment. Employers increasingly expect that young people be multi-skilled and 'job ready' upon leaving school, yet they are still remunerated according to age, rather than skill level. Young workers continue to pay the same amount for everyday goods and services as workers receiving full award rates, and this puts them at a significant financial disadvantage, often situating them below the poverty line and hindering their path to financial independence. The youth sector remains concerned that these issues will be exacerbated through the implementation of federal industrial relations reforms known as *WorkChoices*.

YACSA places a strong emphasis on the rights of young people to have fair access to the labour market and to high quality, rewarding and secure jobs which recognise the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for the creation of stable, sustainable employment opportunities for young people in a wide range of industries and sectors
- Advocating for the resourcing of independent information and advocacy services for all young workers, including support provided in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner
- Advocating for the improvement of South Australia's schedule of traineeship wages and workplace conditions, including redundancy benefits, long service leave and superannuation provisions
- Advocating for the right of young workers to collectively bargain to establish and maintain appropriate workplace conditions
- Advocating for the expansion of public sector traineeships and a minimum conversion rate of 50% to full-time jobs
- Encouraging marketing and promotion to employers of the benefits of employing young people

¹ Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 11, p. 35.

² Kryger, T. 2004, *Casual employment: Trends and characteristics*, Parliamentary Library Research Note 2003-04, no. 53, 24 May 2004, Australian Parliamentary Library, p. 1.

³ The Advertiser 2005, *Youth survey results 2005*, Adelaide, p. 24.



Employment

- Highlighting the issues associated with youth unemployment and underemployment, including geographic, gender and cultural differences in youth unemployment, unemployment issues specific to CALD and Indigenous young people, and broader social, economic, housing and industrial issues impacting on unemployed young people
- Encouraging industrial parties to develop and trial a full range of appropriate employment, training and wage options for young people
- Advocating for the Australian Fair Pay Commission to consult widely with young people and their representative organisations when deciding traineeship and youth wages on a case by case basis

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Discrimination against young people
- Education
- Income and poverty
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Relationships with others
- Road safety and transport
- Safety and violence
- Training

Resources:

- Noarlunga Health Services 1999, *Surviving unemployment: Health consequences of youth unemployment – implications and directions for South Australia's health and human services*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide.
- Pocock, B., Prosser, R. and Bridge, K. 2004, *'Only a casual ...' How casual work affects employees, households and communities in Australia*, Labour Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of Adelaide, Adelaide.

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Income and poverty

One of the greatest disadvantages facing young people is disparity of income compared to the wider population. As a result of high levels of youth unemployment and diminished income support payments, young people living in low-income households are at a greater risk of poverty than middle-aged and older people,¹ although in some areas, intergenerational poverty is taking its toll. A recent parliamentary inquiry found that there was considerable risk of the growth of intergenerational poverty in South Australia.² Further, young people are economically disadvantaged by being paid youth wages and training wages, which in many instances situate them below the poverty line. Recent statistics show that young people have the lowest mean weekly earnings of all full-time workers, with young people aged 15 to 19 earning \$395 weekly compared with \$854 for full-time workers aged 25 to 34.³ Such disadvantage often negatively impacts on young people's access to education, training, employment and housing.

Current thinking about young people's income requirements are significantly informed by assumptions about young people's dependence on family and their productivity as workers. Centrelink policy determines that a young person on Youth Allowance must generally turn 25 before they can be eligible for an independent rate of payment. Industrial policy justifies youth and training wages by assuming that young people are not as skilled or productive as older workers and require greater supervision. For many young people, these assumptions do not hold true. Yet, such policies greatly impact on young people's ability to earn a living wage, despite the fact that young people pay the same prices for everyday goods and services as the rest of the population does.

For these and other reasons, the rate of youth debt is on the rise nationally. Young people are increasingly being targeted by financial institutions to take up credit cards and personal loans, and the telecommunications industry strongly targets young people to purchase mobile phones and phone contracts. Australia-wide, three quarters of young people aged 14 to 24 now own a mobile phone.⁴ Young people are also more likely to go into debt through the purchase of a first car, or by being left with or incurring debt from rent arrears or unpaid utilities bills through share-housing arrangements. For young people living in rural and regional areas, there are often higher costs associated with the purchase of food, clothing and petrol.⁵

In 1997 the concept of mutual obligation arrangements was introduced to Australia's social security system, which requires income support recipients to "participate in an activity which both helps to improve employability and makes a contribution to the community in return for payments of unemployment benefits."⁶ Mutual obligation arrangements have largely been focused on younger people, and most commonly take the form of obligatory participation in the community-based employment program, Work for the Dole. Non-compliance in mutual obligation activities often results in a suspension of income support payments for a period of time, referred to as 'breaching'.

YACSA has serious concerns about the use of breaching as a tool for enforcing mutual obligation. Suspending payments to young people on low incomes can have a strongly adverse effect on housing and health outcomes, particularly mental health, and on young people's ability to pay for basic necessities such as food and medication. It may also impact on young people's ability to look for work. In many instances, young people are breached in response to circumstances that are beyond their control. Recent data indicates that 30.6% of all job seekers were young people in receipt of Youth Allowance, yet this group accounted for 50.6% of all activity test breaches and 57.6% of all administrative breaches.⁷ Youth Allowance recipients are more likely to be breached than recipients of other activity-tested income support payments, and Indigenous recipients of Youth Allowance are more likely to be breached than non-Indigenous recipients.⁸

YACSA does not support the concept of mutual obligation, on the understanding that such programs do not provide a solution to the lack of real sustainable jobs that will provide young people with an independent living income. YACSA further considers it unethical to oblige young people to work at below-minimum wages as a condition of survival.

¹ Australian Council of Social Service 2003, *The emergency relief handbook: A guide for emergency relief workers*, 3rd edn., Strawberry Hills, p. 14.

² Parliament of South Australia 2003, *Poverty inquiry: Seventeenth report of the Social Development Committee*, Adelaide, p. 67.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *Australian social trends: Work: Young people in employment*, Canberra.

⁴ Youth Action and Policy Association 2004, *Young people, mobile phones and debt [fact sheet]*, Sydney.

⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004, *Australia's young people: Their health and wellbeing 2003*, Canberra, p. 355.

⁶ Howard, J. 1999, federation address, cited in Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2000, *Mutual Obligation: Policy and practice in Australia compared with the UK*, Ultimo, p. 7.

⁷ Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 4, p. 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 4, p. 17.



Income and poverty

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating that eligibility for the independent rate for a range of income support payments should not be age-related
- Promoting the use of cost-of-living benchmarks in the setting of Centrelink payment rates
- Advocating for a reduction in activity tests and identification requirements for young people, particularly young people experiencing homelessness
- Advocating for the abolition of the breaching policy associated with mutual obligation arrangements
- Advocating for the removal of the parental means testing threshold for young people experiencing homelessness
- Advocating for the provision of clear rights of appeal for young people to challenge Centrelink breaches, including accessible information about the appeals process and the range of services to support appellants, including independent services
- Advocating for an adequate, integrated, single income support payment for young people, including add-on payments according to individual need and circumstance
- Advocating for the removal of clauses allowing discriminatory rates of pay, and to ensure adequate protection for young workers under the system of Australian Workplace Agreements
- Advocating for the Australian Fair Pay Commission to consult widely with young people and their representative organisations when deciding traineeship and youth wages on a case by case basis
- Advocating for the creation of a national concession card, similar to the Senior's Card, to redress economic disadvantages specifically experienced by young people in relation to accessing common goods and services
- Advocating that consumer information be provided to young people in a culturally appropriate and accessible format, focusing on how to avoid debt, including through mobile phone contracts and credit cards
- Advocating for the provision of financial counselling and support services specifically for young people
- Encouraging balanced media and public representation of young people experiencing unemployment, including the realities of unemployment, its causes and effects

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Care and protection of children and young people
- Discrimination against young people
- Education
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Public space, private space
- Political engagement
- Relationships with others
- Road safety and transport
- Training

Resources:

- Hetzel, D., Page, A., Glover, J. and Tennant, S. 2004, *Inequality in South Australia: Key determinants of wellbeing, Volume 1: The evidence*, Department of Health, Adelaide.
- Social Policy Research Group 2003, *Breaching and disadvantaged young people: The social and financial impacts*, University of South Australia and Adelaide Central Mission, www.unisa.edu.au/sprg/PDF%20Files/Breaching%20Report%20-%20SPRG.pdf



Training

Traineeship and apprenticeships are important tools for continued learning and pathways to employment for young people, as well as contributing to the skills base of South Australia. For some young people, traineeships and apprenticeships are also a more affordable means of education and training, given the impact of higher education reforms.

However, the youth sector has for some time been concerned that in some instances, young people are being employed as trainees as a form of 'cheap' labour, rather than as a genuine training pathway to employment. This concern is coupled with a rise in traineeships in non-traditional industries, particularly in retail and hospitality. Such industries have previously been the source of short-term employment for many young people, rather than the foundation of long-term careers, yet young workers are increasingly being engaged as trainees, even when they are simply seeking some part-time work. Further, YACSA does not condone employers who regularly exploit young people through 'work experience' or 'unpaid training' arrangements with the largely unkept promise of eventual employment.

Employers who are committed to quality, appropriate training, are interested in and supportive of the training process, who understand their obligations and provide good occupational health, safety and welfare and long-term employment options contribute greatly towards the uptake and completion of traineeships and apprenticeships. Flexibility on the part of employers is also valuable, particularly when a young person needs to put family, health, housing or other issues first. It is important that young people do not miss out on continuing and completing training and qualifications because of a need to address important issues in other aspects of their lives.

YACSA has long advocated for the abolition of youth wages on the grounds that they do not constitute a living wage. Under the National Training Wage Award, a young person aged 16 may earn a minimum of \$173 per week.¹ Yet, the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research reports that the Henderson poverty line for single people in the labour force is \$333.45 per week, including housing costs.² The minimum wage for a 16 year old is therefore approximately 52% below the poverty line, making traineeships and apprenticeships difficult options to live on unless a young person is not living independently or is otherwise financially supported. Both youth and training wages continue to disadvantage young people and keep them below the poverty line in the beginning of their working lives, regardless of their independence. In many instances, the majority of training contracts do not include severance or redundancy benefits, and an employer is not required to pay superannuation to apprentices or trainees employed for less than fifteen hours per week, a situation that may be financially disadvantaging for a significant number of young people.³

Traineeship and apprenticeship uptake and completion numbers are also adversely affected by industry changes such as the shifting of manufacturing bases or the privatisation of state infrastructure, resulting in fewer opportunities for trainees and apprentices locally.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for the improvement of South Australia's schedule of traineeship wages and workplace conditions, including redundancy benefits, long service leave and superannuation provisions
- Advocating for an expansion of industrial relations systems so that they can protect trainees and apprentices
- Supporting formal accreditation and cross-accreditation of all vocationally-based training offered and provided to young people
- Advocating for clear pathways and appropriate bridging support between education and training opportunities
- Encouraging improved links between training programs and employment opportunities, with particular emphasis on regional employment development
- Encouraging strong partnerships between training providers and youth services to improve understanding about youth-specific issues
- Advocating for streamlining the process of engaging a trainee or apprentice to encourage smaller businesses
- Encouraging the provision of training programs for employers engaging young trainees and apprentices, and recognition of employers who are positively acknowledged by young trainees and apprentices

¹ Wagenet, *Award AW790899: National Training Wage Award 2000*, www.wagenet.gov.au/WageNet/Search/view.asp?docid=247617&query=&page=11&quickview=Y

² Brotherhood of St Laurence 2004, Poverty line update, www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/Poverty_line_update_Oct04.pdf

³ SA Unions 2004, Submission to the Traineeship and Apprenticeship Futures Project, Adelaide, www.saunions.org.au



Training

- Advocating that the trainee subsidy allocated to employers be conditional on minimum standards of employment and training being met, in order to eliminate exploitation of young trainees and apprentices
- Advocating for a range of appropriate, quality, ongoing support, mediation, representation and advice options for young trainees and apprentices, including information on rights and obligations prior to commencement of a training contract; monitoring and support during the training contract; and additional support to young people experiencing disadvantage
- Encouraging adequate resourcing of the Training Advocate so that a broader advocacy service may be offered
- Promoting young people who have completed a traineeship or apprenticeship as being skilled, experienced and valuable workers

For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Discrimination against young people
- Education
- Employment
- Income and poverty
- Road safety and transport

Resources:

- Government of South Australia 2003, *Skills South Australia: Final report of the Ministerial Inquiry, Skills for the future*, May 2003, www.saskillsinquiry.sa.gov.au
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research, www.ncver.edu.au

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Culturally and linguistically diverse young people

Australia is an increasingly culturally diverse country. Nationally, 15% of young people aged 15 to 24 were born in countries other than Australia: most commonly, in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Malaysia and China. Almost 16% of young people nationally speak a language other than English at home, and around 10% of overseas-born young people nationally live in South Australia.¹ There are also smaller population groups of young people who are living in the community on permanent or temporary protection visas. Many of these young people originate from the Sudan, Serbia, Bosnia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia and Sierra Leone.²

While Australia identifies as a multicultural nation, there are still significant barriers facing culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. The development of personal and cultural identity for CALD young people is a complex component of their lives, particularly so when a young person is living with two or more cultures, each with their own values, traditions and languages. Challenges are also often faced by young people who are born in Australia to parents of CALD background. For some young people these difficulties may include lower self-esteem, inter-generational conflict, and mental health issues.

Some young people may also have increased family responsibilities, particularly if family members speak limited English and the young person is fluent. Young people may therefore be required to interpret for family members, attend appointments with them and in some instances take on carer responsibilities. Conversely, language barriers for young people can be socially isolating, and can diminish employment and some educational opportunities. Such challenges are compounded by experiences of racism and discrimination in the wider community.

Experiences of racism have a strongly negative impact on CALD young people. The proportion of calls to Kids Helpline about bullying is 30% higher for CALD young people than Anglo-Australian young people.³ Stereotypes persisting in the broader community can also have a severely restricting and harmful effect. Young people from some cultural groups are stereotyped as being academic high achievers, for example; others are stereotyped as being criminally inclined or prone to gang-related activities. These stereotypes can act against young people in potentially any interaction with others, including professionals such as teachers, doctors and police.

Religion and spirituality play an important part in the life of many young people, with 55.5% of young people in South Australia aged 15 to 24 identifying as Christian. Within the national Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu communities, young people aged 15 to 24 made up 18.7%, 17.2% and 17.1% of the community respectively.⁴ Religious and spiritual activity has been found to have a generally positive impact on young people, contributing to an affirmative sense of identity and hopefulness for the future.

YACSA is committed to:

- Combating discrimination in all its forms and promoting cultural diversity
- Raising awareness in the broader community and in the youth sector about the issues and interests of CALD young people
- Promoting awareness and understanding of religious and spiritual diversity, recognising that diversity embraces the freedom of religious and spiritual belief
- Advocating for culturally appropriate strategies by which all young people may be involved in decision-making processes
- Encouraging youth research, policy and program activities that actively engage with cultural diversity issues and are inclusive of, and beneficial to, diverse youth population groups
- Promoting the collaboration of the multicultural and youth sectors in providing advocacy and a range of services that meet the diverse needs of CALD young people
- Advocating for the adequate provision of support services for newly arrived young people to assist in the transition to education, employment and training options
- Encouraging the development of cross-cultural training for people who work with CALD young people
- Advocating that service planning for CALD young people is undertaken with the participation of CALD young people and those who work with and for them, and includes an exploration of cultural assumptions which may inform service provision

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *Census of Population and Housing: Australia's youth 2001*, Cat. 2059.0, Canberra, p. 19.

² Youth Affairs Council of South Australia 2003, *Newly arrived young people fact sheet*, Adelaide, p. 4.

³ Kids Help Line 2004, *Kids Help Line newsletter*, November 2004, p. 5.

⁴ Expanded Community Profiles (xls table XII), 2001, *Australian Bureau of Statistics in Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 12, p. 42, 45-46.



Culturally and linguistically diverse young people

For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Discrimination against young people
- Perceptions of young people
- Political engagement
- Relationships with others
- Young carers
- Young refugees and asylum seekers
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers 2000, *Racism. No way!: A guide for Australian schools*, Darlinghurst, www.racismnoway.com.au
- Youth Affairs Network of Queensland 2001, *Coping in a new world: The social and emotional well being of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*, Brisbane.

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Indigenous young people

The Youth Affairs Council of South Australia recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners and occupants of this country, linked to the land by a cultural and spiritual relationship. YACSA believes that, in order to achieve reconciliation, it is essential that national policy, supported by state, territory and local government, leads the way in addressing issues of land, culture, language and access to services and resources. YACSA acknowledges the many Indigenous cultural groups within and around South Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people under 25 represent an estimated 3.1% of South Australia's youth population, but account for 57.7% of the total Indigenous population.¹ YACSA acknowledges, however, that many Indigenous cultures define youth and adulthood not by age, but by whether or not a person has undertaken specific learnings and practices.

Indigenous young people today continue to be adversely affected by past policies of dispossession and assimilation and the loss of family, land, culture and language, through low health, education, employment and housing outcomes, and over-representation in the child protection and justice systems.²

The higher levels of social disadvantage generally experienced by Indigenous young people can make it challenging to make the transition through schooling to further education, training or employment. Currently, the study of Indigenous languages and cultures in Australian schools is limited, and research suggests that there are not enough Indigenous teachers and education workers to meet the numbers of Indigenous students.³ Mainstream educational and training systems are too often culturally inappropriate for Indigenous young people, however. Expectations to 'fit in' may be isolating and can have far-reaching effects, including reduced school retention, lower literacy skills and decreased linkages with post-school options.

Research indicates that even after taking geographical location into account, Indigenous young people experience higher rates of unemployment than non-Indigenous young people with the same level of education.⁴ By extension, Indigenous young people are therefore more likely than non-Indigenous young people to require income support, with 54.1% of Indigenous young people nationally found to be in receipt of a Centrelink payment.⁵

Indigenous young people are more likely than non-Indigenous young people to be victims of crime, with 36% of young men and 30% of young women aged 15 to 24 surveyed reporting experience of physical or threatened violence in 2003-2004.⁶ Indigenous young people, and particularly young men, are also over-represented in national youth suicide rates.⁷ For many reasons, including lower life expectancies,⁸ the loss of family and community members can be a painfully recurrent experience for Indigenous young people, and considerable time may be spent in grief and mourning.

Many Indigenous young people have positive, committed relationships with family and strong support within their communities. Anecdotal evidence indicates that community support for Indigenous children and young people in care is significant, with younger Indigenous people increasingly becoming foster carers. YACSA acknowledges the importance of positive Indigenous role models for young people, especially those in the public eye through sports and the arts. We commend the dedication of many Indigenous communities which seek to bring together Elders and young people to promote Indigenous cultural practices and mentor current and future community leaders.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for the elimination of racism within individual, educational, institutional and community frameworks
- Recognising and respecting Indigenous young people's cultural, recreational and spiritual needs

¹ Department of Human Services 2001, *Statistical profile of children and young people*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, p. 6.

² Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2003, *Face the facts: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/face_facts/atsi.htm

³ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2003, *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: Key indicators 2003*, Productivity Commission, Canberra, p. 7.13.

⁴ Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce 2001, *Footprints to the future*, Canberra, p. 54.

⁵ Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 4, p. 21.

⁶ Australian Institute of Criminology 2004, *Indigenous victims of violence*, Crime facts info, no. 79, July 2004, www.aic.gov.au/topics/indigenous/victims-offenders/victims.html

⁷ Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 6, p. 46.

⁸ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2005, *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: Key indicators 2005 - Overview*, Productivity Commission, Canberra, p. 5.



Indigenous young people

- Supporting the reconciliation process and the immediate implementation of the recommendations of the 1997 report, *Bringing them home*
- Advocating that all policies, services and programs intended to address the needs of Indigenous young people must be developed locally in partnership with Indigenous communities and young people, and must recognise links between culture, land, language, kinship, identity and self-awareness
- Advocating for improved education, training, employment, housing and health opportunities for Indigenous young people
- Advocating for the identification and removal of barriers to mainstream youth and community services for Indigenous young people
- Advocating for support for Indigenous young people when they take on roles of responsibility and leadership within their communities
- Promoting and encouraging a range of appropriate services and programs for Indigenous young people
- Advocating for the provision of culturally appropriate information and education about young people's rights and responsibilities, including the use of complaints processes
- Advocating for support for Indigenous mentors, Elders and role models for young Indigenous people
- Encouraging sports, arts and recreational activities that assist in maintaining cultural links for Indigenous young people
- Encouraging cultural connectivity, including the teaching of Indigenous languages, through schools and alternative education programs
- Advocating for enhanced opportunities for Indigenous young people to participate in decision-making processes, including political processes
- Promoting Indigenous cultural awareness within the youth sector and the broader community, including those who work with Indigenous young people

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Care and protection of children and young people
- Education
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Public space, private space
- Political engagement
- Rural young people
- Safety and violence
- Sexual health
- Young carers
- Young parents
- Young people in care
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Ausyouth 2002, *Youth development for young Indigenous Australians: A consultation document*, Adelaide.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997, *Bringing them home: National inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*, Sterling Press, Sydney.

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Perceptions of young people

The wider community often has mixed ideas about young people. Young people are sometimes viewed as being socially and economically dependent, in need of protection or intervention, irresponsible or unable to think or speak for themselves. They are also sometimes perceived as being criminally-inclined, risk-takers, and a threat to older people and social order in general. Stereotyping of young people (and the discrimination that sometimes accompanies it) can be very detrimental to young people's self-esteem.

The community sometimes fluctuates between being afraid for young people (and particularly for their futures) and being afraid of young people. Community expectations about young people and crime, for instance, both fuel and are fuelled by media representations of young people as out-of-control, sometimes by misinterpreting youth crime statistics and often with little or no discussion of underlying social conditions. Periodically, communities may become gripped by a sense of 'moral panic' in response to media portrayals of an issue, such as youth crime, and calls for tough legislation to control the perceived problem may result.

YACSA believes that media images of young people reflect, in part, prejudicial attitudes in the community towards the rights and aspirations of young people. In a state with only one daily newspaper and an emphasis on talkback radio and magazine-style television, the images portrayed of young people tend to be polarised around either the young achiever role model, or the notoriety of the young offender. The reality is that the overwhelming majority of young people fit neither category, and are therefore all too often excluded or misrepresented by popular media.

Stereotypes about young people can have a strong impact on young people's lives. It can affect the way that they are treated by older people and professionals, such as police, doctors and teachers; and it can affect their access to employment and housing, amongst other things. The youth sector in particular often reports that negative employer perceptions of young people are sometimes a strong disincentive to take on younger workers. Stereotypes about young people can also lead to policies, programs and legislation being made that adversely affect young people.

Young people living in South Australia are strongly diverse with regard to location, age, gender identity, socio-economic circumstances, sexuality, race, health, educational, transport and other needs, nationality, family background, ability, life experience and many other factors. YACSA believes that the diversity of young people's lives and experiences must be acknowledged, and represented appropriately.

YACSA is committed to:

- Encouraging increased employment opportunities for young people in the media to better reflect the issues and interests currently affecting young people
- Encouraging the participation of young people in alternative or independent media outlets, including student and community radio, newspapers, magazines, fanzines, through the Internet, etc
- Advocating for the support, development and resourcing of a range of alternative, cultural and student media for and by young people
- Promoting a balanced diversity of young people's issues and interests through mainstream and other media outlets
- Challenging current negative stereotypes of young people in the media
- Advocating for adequate funding to public and community media outlets so that an appropriate proportion of programming for young people and/or developed by young people may be broadcast
- Advocating for accurate, professional and balanced reporting on youth specific issues, including justice, road safety and employment issues, in the mainstream media
- Supporting and acknowledging journalists and media outlets who champion youth affairs issues in an even-handed and appropriate way



Perceptions of young people

For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Discrimination against young people
- Employment
- Housing
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Political engagement
- Public space, private space
- Relationships with others
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Aris, S. 1997, *Young people and the media*, Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, Youth Action and Policy Association, Sydney.
- Bessant, J. and Hil, R. 1997, *Youth, crime and the media: Media representation of and reaction to young people in relation to law and order*, National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Hobart.
- Vibewire Youth Services, *Vibewire.net: Rewiring youth media*, www.vibewire.net

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Rural young people

Across Australia, 19% of the youth population aged 15 to 24 years live in inner regional areas, 9% in outer regional areas, and 3% live in remote regions.¹ Around 32% of public high school students in years 8 to 12+ live outside the Adelaide statistical division.² While some regional communities are inclusive and supportive of young people, in many instances young people report that there are not enough employment, training, education and recreational opportunities in their local communities, and that they have little choice but to seek greater opportunities in the major cities.³ Young people are also often limited in their housing options in regional areas. The youth sector reports that in many regions, it is very difficult for young people to access safe, affordable housing, either through public housing or the private rental market. To that end, the strong movement of young people out of the regions and into metropolitan centres continues as a common theme in Australian migratory patterns, with often negative effects on regional communities. Some communities recognise this, however, and endeavour to maintain links with young people and make the community attractive for them to return. It is also often difficult for young people to meet increased living and travelling costs and attempt to settle in a new environment without the assistance of established support networks.

Young people living regionally also often experience a reduction in youth-specific services, such as supported accommodation services, health services (including mental health, sexual health and drug and alcohol services) and generalist youth services. For many communities, the only youth-specific services available are delivered periodically through the outreach activities of an external regional or metropolitan agency. Mental health issues for young people living rurally are often exacerbated by geographical isolation, service shortages and the fear of disclosure of the issue to the local community. Among young people living in remote areas there are higher rates of death due to intentional self-harm than there are amongst young people living rurally or in metropolitan centres.⁴

A lack of appropriate recreational activities and transport options for young people also often means that young people resort to socialising locally in public spaces, which can heighten tensions around the use of public space. In some rural communities, young people, especially in groups, are sometimes viewed as trouble-makers, and there are calls from the wider community to restrict or police young people's use of public space, and sometimes impose curfews on them. In some instances, these issues may be exacerbated by racism.

Inadequate transport options remain a priority issue for rural and regional young people. Many are reliant on individual transport by car due to a lack of affordable, reliable and safe public transport, and therefore are more likely to have road accidents and be injured or killed by them than metropolitan young people.⁵

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for the development and sustainable resourcing of youth-friendly and age-appropriate youth services and spaces specifically tailored to the needs of rural young people, including crisis services, within regional centres and across rural townships
- Advocating for support for young people to move between regions, from country to metropolitan locations and back, and for metropolitan young people to move to the country, as necessary
- Advocating for improved cost and availability of a range of regional housing options for young people, including supported and crisis accommodation, private rental, public and community housing
- Advocating for quality, sustainable, fair and equitable regional employment opportunities for young people, including ensuring appropriate wage and industrial conditions for seasonal and casual work
- Encouraging the development and sustainable resourcing of health promotion programs specifically tailored to the needs of rural young people
- Encouraging the development of appropriate, safe and affordable transport options for young people living regionally and rurally, including community transport schemes
- Advocating for an increase in a range of transitional school to work programs for rural young people
- Advocating for balanced regional media and public representation of young people
- Advocating for a variety of youth participation activities in all regional areas in South Australia

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *Census of population and housing, Australia's youth*, cat. 2059.0, Canberra, p. 3.

² Government of South Australia 2005, 2005 | 06 Portfolio statement, Budget paper 4, vol. 1, p 12.16, 12.18.

³ Youth Affairs Council of Victoria 2002, *Reversing the drift: A solutions summit for young people and workers with young people in rural and regional Victoria* [proceedings], Melbourne, p. 4.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004, *Australia's young people: Their health and wellbeing 2003*, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 360.

⁵ Ibid., p. 360.



Rural young people

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Discrimination against young people
- Drug use
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Indigenous young people
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Public space, private space
- Political engagement
- Road safety and transport
- Safety and violence
- Same-sex attracted young people
- Sexual health
- Young carers
- Youth participation
- Youth sector

Resources:

- Alston, M. and Kent, J. 2001, *Generation X-pendable: Young, rural and looking for work, an examination of young people's perceptions of employment opportunities in rural areas*, Centre for Rural Social Research, Charles Sturt University, Queensland, www.csu.edu.au/research/crsr/about/GenX.pdf
- Currie, G., Gammie, F., Waingold, C., Paterson, D. and Vandarsar, D. 2005, *Rural and regional young people and transport: Improving access to transport for young people in rural and regional Australia*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Canberra.

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Same-sex attracted young people

A recent national sexual health survey of young people in Years 10 and 12 at school indicates that 3.3% of young men and 6.7% of young women are same-sex attracted, with a further 1.3% of young men and 2.1% of young women reporting feeling unsure about their sexuality.¹ Further, while a third of same-sex attracted young people surveyed nationally reported feeling “great” about their sexuality and did not report any issues, and a further 28% felt “pretty good”; 30% felt “OK”, 7% felt “pretty bad” and 3% felt “really bad”. Many of the survey’s respondents also noted feeling isolated, confused or concerned about negative treatment from others, and for some young people, this had led to difficulties coping with their sexuality.²

Young people continue to report homophobic bullying and harassment from peers, in schools, in the workplace and in the wider community, which can be very emotionally isolating and may also prevent young people from accessing information and support services. These issues may be exacerbated when young people cannot rely on family or friends for support.

Same-sex attracted young people may experience difficulties at school, homelessness, higher rates of drug and alcohol use, mental health issues and family conflict, and they are at significant risk of self-harming and suicidal behaviours. Same-sex attracted young people may be as much as six times more likely than the general population to attempt suicide, especially so for young people in rural areas, and the average age for same-sex attracted young people to first attempt suicide is between 15 and 17 years of age.³

For same-sex attracted young people living in rural, regional and outer metropolitan locations, these issues are compounded: they may experience “the stigma associated with homosexuality, the disempowerment common among young people and the difficulties of contemporary rural life.”⁴ Geographical isolation, combined with a lack of information and a lack of gay and lesbian role models, can make it challenging for many same-sex attracted young people to stay in rural communities.

YACSA acknowledges that homophobia and heterosexism can lead to acts of bullying, harassment, violence and exclusion, and we are committed to redressing these.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for legislative change so that same-sex couples are legally recognised
- Advocating for public education campaigns that promote positive and inclusive messages about same-sex attraction
- Working collaboratively to advocate against homophobia, heterosexism, disadvantage and discrimination on the basis of sexuality or sexual preference
- Advocating for a range of culturally appropriate information programs for young people regarding same-sex attraction, both within schools and through youth services and programs as appropriate
- Advocating that sexual health and relationships education in schools sensitively encompasses issues and information about same-sex attraction
- Challenging homophobia and heterosexism both within the education sector and in the wider community
- Advocating that schools ensure that the needs of same-sex attracted young people are met
- Advocating that teachers, administrators and support personnel are trained to provide support to same-sex attracted young people
- Advocating that schools and services to young people maintain anti-bullying and harassment policies and practices that include and support the issues affecting same-sex attracted young people

¹ Smith, A., Agius, P., Dyson, S., Mitchell, A. and Pitts, M. 2003, *Secondary students and sexual health 2002: Results of the third national survey of Australian secondary students, HIV/AIDS and sexual health*, Monograph series no. 47, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, p. 2.

² Hillier, L., Dempsey, D., Harrison, L., Beale, L., Matthews, L., and Rosenthal, D. 2002, *Writing themselves in: A national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same-sex attracted young people*, Monograph series no. 7, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, p. 30-31.

³ Nicholas 1998 in Dyson, S., Mitchell, A., Smith, A., Dowsett, G., Pitts, M. and Hillier, L. 2003, *Don't ask, don't tell – Hidden in the crowd: The need for documenting links between sexuality and suicidal behaviours among young people*, Report of the same-sex attracted youth suicide data collection project, Monograph series no. 45, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, p. 13.

⁴ Sidoti, C. cited in Quinn, K. 2003, *Rural suicide and same-sex attracted youth: Issues, interventions and implications for rural counsellors*, Rural and remote health 3 [online], no. 222.



Same-sex attracted young people

- Advocating for the provision and resourcing of a range of culturally appropriate and youth-friendly information and support services for same-sex attracted and transgendered young people regarding sexual and gender identity, safe sex and sexual health, especially in regional and rural areas
- Promoting awareness training for organisations, services and workers with same-sex attracted young people
- Advocating for the provision of information and support to parents, siblings, families and carers of same-sex attracted young people
- Promoting support for young people whose parent/s or carer/s identify as same-sex attracted

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Discrimination against young people
- Drug use
- Education
- Homelessness
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Political engagement
- Relationships with others
- Rural young people
- Safety and violence
- Sexual health
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Hillier, L., Turner, A. and Mitchell, A. 2005, *Writing themselves in again: 6 years on – the second national report on the sexual health and well-being of same sex attracted young people*, Monograph series no. 50, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/downloads/Reports/writing_themselves_in_again.pdf
- Klein, T. and Simmons, N. 2001, *Homophobia: Get. Over. It!*, Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, Brisbane.

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Research has identified that young carers, although sometimes hidden, are growing in number. 17% of carers in Australia are aged under 26 years, and 10% of all young people aged 15 to 25 years in Australia undertake a caring role.¹ There are an estimated 13, 300 young carers under the age of 18 living in South Australia.² These young people may be the primary carer for a parent, adult relative or sibling with a chronic illness or disability. They may have significant caring responsibilities within the home including practical tasks, personal care and emotional support, and they may also be the key support person for a parent who may be designated as the family carer. In many instances, young people have no choice in whether or not they undertake a caring role: they may be the only family member able or available to do so.

Some young people find their caring roles to be rewarding and enjoyable, and they consider the skills and experiences they acquire through the caring process to be very beneficial, especially if they are supported in the caring work they do. Young people caring for a family member also often find that this contributes to developing strong family bonds.

Without adequate support, however, young carers may be vulnerable; they may be more likely not to complete their education, or to develop a significant mental illness or physical injury. Due to their seclusion within the home as part of their caring role, young carers are also often socially isolated within their communities and have significantly reduced opportunities to develop personal and social networks. Their caring role may also have a financial impact, both on household expenses and sometimes on their ability to gain and maintain suitable employment. Young carers may experience a number of disadvantages as a result of caring; among them physical and emotional exhaustion, stress, interrupted sleep, depression, and feeling alone, unsupported and overwhelmed. They often have limited access to age-appropriate information and very limited access to support services, and may feel reluctant to access services for fear of being judged in their ability to provide care, or that authorities will take action to separate family members. The experiences of young carers living in rural and regional areas are often compounded by social isolation, and it is estimated that between one third and one half of all young carers live in rural or remote locations.³

YACSA is committed to:

- Recognising the considerable contribution made by young carers to family life and to the broader community
- Advocating for a range of program responses to meet the diversity of needs arising for young carers, including transport assistance, family support, information and advice and income support
- Advocating for access to carer support and respite services that flexibly deliver age and culturally appropriate services for children and young people
- Advocating for appropriate forms of service delivery, resources and information for young carers from rural and regional areas, including Indigenous young carers
- Acknowledging that young people should be able to choose to stop undertaking their caring role if they wish
- Advocating that young carers be recognised and treated separately from the person requiring care
- Advocating for increased opportunities for peer support for young carers
- Advocating for an educational system that acknowledges the role of young carers and provides flexible options for young carers to participate and achieve strong educational outcomes
- Advocating that young carers' knowledge, skills and abilities are formally acknowledged and accredited as appropriate
- Advocating for employment and training programs targeted at young carers to assist transitions to work or returning to work following a period of caring responsibility

¹ Carers Australia 2004, *Young carers in Australia*, www.carersaustralia.com.au/info_youngfact.html

² Carers Association of South Australia 2005, *Young carers of South Australia*, www.carers-sa.asn.au/yc

³ Carers Australia 2004, *Young carers in Australia*, www.carersaustralia.com.au/info_youngfact.html



For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Culturally and linguistically diverse young people
- Discrimination against young people
- Education
- Employment
- Income and poverty
- Indigenous young people
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Political engagement
- Relationships with others
- Rural young people
- Training
- Youth participation

Publications:

- Carers Australia 2002, *Young carers research project*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, www.carersaustralia.com.au/documents/young_carersfinal_report.pdf
- Carers SA 2005, *Young carers of South Australia*, Adelaide, www.carers-sa.asn.au/yc

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Research shows that many Australians are generally becoming parents later in life, with teenage pregnancy rates declining over the last several decades. In 2003, 4.4% of the total births in South Australia were to young women aged 19 or under.¹ The Indigenous fertility rate, however, is significantly higher than for the total population, with Indigenous young women under 30 comprising almost three quarters of the Indigenous total fertility rate, compared to half of the total fertility rate for all women in Australia.² Australia-wide, the median age of motherhood is 30.5 years for all women and 24.9 for Indigenous mothers.³

Social changes that have seen many Australian births occurring later in life have also meant that those who do become parents at a young age may also be susceptible to becoming socio-economically disadvantaged. This is particularly the case if the young person is a sole or unsupported parent and/or if the pregnancy is unplanned. Pregnancy and parenting during the teenage years can be associated with early school leaving, unemployment and underemployment, depression, social isolation and stigmatisation, housing instability and income support dependence.⁴ Some physical complications may also arise from births to younger women, with young mothers more likely to deliver premature babies, and those aged under 20 at a higher risk of infant perinatal death.⁵

However, YACSA acknowledges that, despite some negative media stereotypes, many young people want to be parents, choose to have children earlier in life and enjoy supporting and caring for their children. Young people with children can be very resilient, and often make committed and loving parents. Young parents may also find it easier to relate to children and may be well placed to adapt to the physical demands of raising a child.

In recent years the youth and health sectors have become aware of a growing need to provide support not only to young mothers, but to young fathers, many of whom play an integral parenting role. Such supports may include parenting and life skills training, as well as support to complete secondary schooling and transition to employment or further training options. Peer support programs are also important to many young parents. YACSA further acknowledges that access to safe, affordable and appropriate housing, good quality child care and transport options are very necessary to many young parents.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for targeted programs for young parents which support them to reconnect with or stay in school or training options during pregnancy and following birth
- Advocating for a range of ante-natal care and preparation for parenthood training options for young mothers and fathers
- Advocating for a range of support programs for young mothers and fathers, including the facilitation of peer support
- Advocating for the provision of a range of parenting and life skills training options for young parents
- Advocating for free or affordable child care options for young parents to assist them to reconnect with or stay in school, training and employment, to meet their own health needs and to rebuild or maintain social connections and supports
- Advocating for the provision of inclusive education and information programs on safe sex practices, pregnancy prevention and relationships education that target sexually active and non-sexually active young people in culturally appropriate ways
- Raising awareness about issues affecting young parents and young pregnant women, and redressing negative media stereotyping about young mothers and fathers

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *2003 Births*, cat. 3301.0, Canberra, p. 41.

² Ibid., p. 6.

³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003, *Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing*, Canberra, p. 113.

⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

Young parents



For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Discrimination against young people
- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Political engagement
- Relationships with others
- Road safety and transport
- Sexual health
- Training
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Adelaide Central Community Health Service and Second Story 2004, *GOSSYP: Guide of sanity and survival for young parents*, Adelaide, www.cyh.com/resources/publications
- Jolley, G. and Masters, S. 2004, *Talking Realities ... Young parenting: A peer education project, evaluation report*, South Australian Community Health Research Unit, Adelaide.

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Young people in care

There are many reasons why children and young people are no longer able to live with their parent/s or extended families. Some young people are not protected within their families and suffer abuse and neglect. In other circumstances, a young person's parent/s or caregiver/s may not be able to care for them adequately or there may be significant family conflict.

For these reasons and more, a young person may no longer be able to live at home, and they may be separated from their families for periods of time that may stretch from days or weeks to years. Some young people may be able to live at home subject to a care and protection order, in which child protection authorities work with the young person and their family to improve their living situation. However, young people who are subject to a guardianship order are required to leave their family home and be cared for by the state under the guardianship of the Minister. Often, and particularly in situations of short-term care, young people will be placed with a relative or friend of the family (known as kinship care) – an estimated 26% of children and young people in alternative care were placed with kin in 2005–2006.¹ If this is not possible, however, and in situations of 'last resort', young people are placed in out-of-home care, where they may live until they turn 18. Most children and young people in out-of-home care live with foster carers (78%), with only 16% in kinship care and 4% in residential care.² At 30 June 2005, there were 1,049 children and young people aged 18 and under in South Australia under the guardianship of the Minister, and 20% of these were Indigenous children and young people.³

Unlike many young people, who are able to stay with their families until they are ready to leave home, young people in care are usually required to become independent once they turn 18. The State Government provides a limited range of leaving care programs to assist young people in care to transition to independent living arrangements. In some instances, carers or social workers may arrange for a young person to stay with their carer after this time, but such a situation is dependent upon goodwill. In 2001, 59% of 15 to 24 year olds Australia-wide were living in their parental home.⁴ Many of these young people, when they choose to leave home, will still have the option of returning again if necessary; an option largely unavailable to young people in care.

Where a young person is living in out-of-home care, a number of issues can arise, including having to deal with multiple care placements and resultant changes to school and social or support networks, separation from siblings, and inadequate access to or support for educational participation. They may also experience psychosocial issues relating to ineffective parenting and multiple placements.⁵ Anecdotal evidence suggests that young people are increasingly entering out of home care at an older age as a result of behavioural issues. Young people who have been subject to a care and protection order are more likely to experience disadvantage through homelessness, unemployment, reduced health outcomes (including mental health issues), and contact with the justice system.⁶ Young people who have been in care are also more likely to become young parents, which can add an additional level of responsibility and financial obligation to their lives.⁷

YACSA is committed to:

- Promoting the development of strategies to ensure that children and young people in care are protected from further harm, neglect or abuse
- Advocating for the establishment of a national standards framework for out-of-home care, agreed and adhered to by all states and territories
- Advocating for the full implementation of annual reviews for all young people under guardianship orders, including individual plans for all young people in care
- Promoting continued priority access for young people under the guardianship of the Minister to government services, including health care
- Promoting the development of nationally co-ordinated strategies to address the over-representation of Indigenous children and young people in the child protection system

¹ Government of South Australia 2005, *2005 | 06 Portfolio statement*, Budget paper 4, vol. 3, p. 9.31.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2005, *Child protection Australia 2003-04*, Child welfare series, no. 36, Canberra, p. 46.

³ Government of South Australia 2005, *2005 | 06 Portfolio statement*, Budget paper 4, vol. 3, p. 9.30.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *Census of Population and Housing: Australia's youth 2001*, cat. 2059.0, Canberra, p. 32.

⁵ Foundation for Young Australians 2004, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*, Sydney, ch. 5, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 5, p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 5, p. 3.



Young people in care

- Advocating for the establishment of a comprehensive life skills program for all young people leaving care
- Advocating for the establishment of a specific post-care support program to offer ongoing assistance to young people up to the age of 21 who have been in care, and practical assistance to foster carers who continue to provide accommodation and support to young people after they have turned 18
- Advocating for the development of post-placement support strategies and after-care planning
- Advocating for the establishment of specialist supported age-appropriate residential care options for young people, including those who are experiencing mental health and behavioural issues
- Encouraging the development of a comprehensive national study of children and young people's pathways in, through and out of child protection systems to inform policy and practice
- Encouraging adequate resourcing to the South Australian organisation representing children and young people in care, the CREATE Foundation

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Care and protection of children and young people
- Education
- Employment
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Indigenous young people
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Political engagement
- Relationships with others
- Safety and violence
- Sexual health
- Training
- Young parents
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia, *A time to invest: In Australia's most disadvantaged children, young people and their families*, CAFWAA, Haymarket, www.acwa.asn.au/cafwa/TimetoInvest.pdf
- CREATE Foundation 2004, *Australian children and young people in care report card*, Surry Hills, www.create.org.au
- Maunders, D., Liddell, M., Liddell, M. and Green, S. 1999, *Young people leaving care and protection*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Canberra.

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Young people with a disability

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines disability as the presence of one or more of 17 impairments or limitations that have lasted, or are likely to last, for a period of 6 months or more. 1998 estimates conclude that 8.7% of young people aged 15 to 24 in Australia are living with a disability, with the most commonly reported disabilities for young people being intellectual disabilities, followed by musculoskeletal impairment (including arthritis) and respiratory illness.¹

Young people's sense of health and wellbeing may be adversely affected if they are living with a disability. Young people may be restricted in their ability to participate in social and recreational activities and securing employment and training opportunities. They may be more likely to experience social isolation and bullying, and they or their families or caregivers may face significant financial hardship. International research suggests that children and young people with a disability are at increased risk of abuse, and that there is an increased risk of neglect associated with children and young people with multiple disabilities.² Young people may also find that little or no progress has been made to remove or minimise barriers to their participation in and access to a variety of social and recreational activities. For many young people, making the transition out of secondary school can present challenges with regards to options for day programs, training, further education or employment. These issues can all be particularly challenging for young people who are at a time in their life when they are seeking to increase their independence.

Attention has been drawn in recent years to the issue of young people with a disability who are housed in aged care facilities as a result of a lack of funding for appropriate supported accommodation and care services. Such arrangements are socially and developmentally inappropriate, particularly so for young people with a temporary disability who require a rehabilitative approach. Further, the nature of aged care often means that young people do not have access to appropriate physiotherapy, speech pathology, occupational therapy and age/ability-appropriate social and recreational activities.

YACSA remains concerned about the implications of 'Welfare to Work' reforms on young people living with a disability.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for the development of a variety of holistic programs across the state for young people with a disability, including social and recreational options, both with and without a disability focus
- Advocating that young people are appropriately involved in their own case planning
- Advocating for funding for a range of appropriate, affordable and accessible supported accommodation, independent living and personal care and support options for young people with a disability across South Australia
- Advocating for the provision of a range of state-wide home support and respite care services (including before-school, after-school and vacation care) for young people and their families
- Advocating for the provision of support, advice, education and information services to families of young people with disabilities
- Advocating for the establishment of an improved care and protection system for children and young people in South Australia that fully encompasses the particular needs of those with a disability
- Advocating that young people with physical disabilities have access to affordable, quality equipment and personal care options as necessary to promote independence and assist them to participate within their communities
- Advocating for appropriate income support options for young people with a disability
- Advocating for legislative and program initiatives to support young people with a disability to access employment and training opportunities and participate more fully in the labour market
- Advocating for the establishment of services for young people with learning, behavioural and mental disabilities to be supported in maintaining engagement with secondary school and further training options
- Advocating for the establishment of information and education programs about young people with disabilities for those without disabilities

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004, Australia's young people 2003: Their health and wellbeing, Canberra, p. 59, 60, 63.

² Layton, R.A. 2003, Our best investment: A State plan to protect and advance the interests of children, Child Protection Review, Adelaide, p. 14.5, 14.6.



Young people with a disability

- Promoting activities which bring together young people with disabilities and young people without disabilities and their respective families
- Advocating for the adequate support of disability peak bodies
- Advocating for safe, affordable, appropriate and accessible public and privately-owned transport options

For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Care and protection of children and young people
- Discrimination against young people
- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Political engagement
- Transport and road safety
- Young carers
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Dunlop, P. 2002, *Stop, think, act: A youth peer education program*, IDSC, Adelaide, www.idsc.sa.gov.au/publications/data/pdfs/conf-paper-STA.pdf
- Horsnell, S., Strevens, N. and Jarvis, K. 2002, *Kids Help Line peer skills program for young people with intellectual disability*, IDSC, Adelaide, www.idsc.sa.gov.au/publications/data/pdfs/conf-paper-Kids-Help-Line.pdf
- Y Connection, *What is Y Connection?*, www.yconnection.org.au

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Young refugees and asylum seekers

The Australian community has been divided in recent years concerning the debate around Australia's obligations to provide asylum to those seeking it, particularly when asylum seekers arrive by boat. YACSA is particularly concerned with the present and emerging needs of young people who are newly arrived to Australia; especially Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders and Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHMs). In the first half of 2005, 147 young people aged 10 to 19 and 116 young people aged 20 to 29 have been released into the South Australian community with a humanitarian visa, with the majority of these young people being of Sudanese or West African birth.¹ Recent statistics indicate that as of 1 April 2005, some 336 humanitarian visa holders under the age of 25 have a last residential address in South Australia, with the majority of these originating from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran.²

YACSA recognises that the needs of young newly-arrived asylum seekers and refugees are both high and complex. The experience of being detained imposes significant and unquestionable stress on children and young people. Many have witnessed or experienced acts of persecution and torture in their countries of origin and are severely traumatised. In Australia, continued hardships result from a number of complex and often interwoven issues, such as lower levels of English proficiency, insecure accommodation, poverty, and poor physical and mental health as a result of experiencing trauma in one's country of origin, during one's journey to Australia and/or in detention. It is estimated that refugee young people are between 6 and 10 times more likely to experience homelessness than other school-aged young people in Australia.³

Young people may have reduced access to support from or contact with their family and community, and may experience feelings of grief and guilt associated with the loss of or separation from their family. This can be especially the case for UHMs, who may have been accidentally or forcibly separated from their families. Young newly-arrived asylum seekers and refugees may also be subject to racist bullying and harassment in schools and in the wider community.

Further, TPV holders experience significant insecurity and hardship as a result of their temporary status, and considerable distress at not being able to visit families in their country of birth without breaching their visa conditions.

YACSA believes that asylum seekers who have subsequently been recognised as refugees should be afforded permanent protection, and thus be eligible to avail themselves of both government and community services. YACSA does not support Australia's detention policy, and we note that the detention of children and young people seeking asylum directly contravenes article 37 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for the immediate release of all children, young people and their families from detention centres into community-based care
- Advocating for a national young refugee support policy to be developed by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, in consultation with stakeholders
- Advocating for the fair, open and timely processing of refugee applications and for the right to legal assistance and representation at all stages of the process
- Advocating for appropriate income support provisions to assist young people who have been released into the community on a TPV to meet the costs of settling, establishing and maintaining themselves, without the harsh and unsuitable imposition of mutual obligation activity testing
- Advocating for appropriate resettlement support services, such as affordable and suitable housing, counselling, primary health care, English as a second language (ESL) classes, access to tracing services in order to contact family in one's country of origin, etc
- Advocating for the adequate provision of support services for newly arrived young people to assist in the transition to education, employment and training options

¹ Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2005, *Settlement reporting*, www.settlement.immi.gov.au/settlement

² Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, pers. comm., 1 July 2005.

³ Coventry, L., Guerra, C., Mackenzie, D. and Pinkney, S. 2003, *Wealth of all nations: Identification of strategies to assist refugee young people in transition to independence*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Sydney, p. 2.



Young refugees and asylum seekers

- Advocating for the immediate admittance of all asylum seeking children and young people to appropriate education options, including university, with a properly developed program of transition and support to enable them to do so
- Supporting ongoing professional development within the youth sector in order to respond effectively to the existing and emerging needs of young, newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers
- Combating discrimination in all its forms and promoting cultural diversity

For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Care and protection of children and young people
- Culturally and linguistically diverse young people
- Discrimination against young people
- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Income and poverty
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Political engagement
- Relationships with others
- Youth participation

Resources:

- Coventry, L., Guerra, C., Mackenzie, D. and Pinkney, S. 2003, *Wealth of all nations: Identification of strategies to assist refugee young people in transition to independence*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Sydney.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004, *A last resort?: National Inquiry into children in immigration detention*, HREOC, Sydney.
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1990, *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm
- Mohamed, S., Francis, S., Grogan, P., and Sparks, V. 2002, *All I ask for is protection: Young people seeking asylum in Australia*, Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues paper 12, Carlton.

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Arts, sport, culture and recreation

Young people's participation in arts, recreation, cultural and sporting activities is central to developing personal skills and knowledge, identity, confidence and a sense of belonging, as well as attaining and maintaining good physical and mental health and wellbeing. These activities have long been valued by the youth sector as a means of engaging young people, raising cultural awareness and building practical skills, and are a strong means of reaffirming cultural identity, particularly for young people of Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. YACSA recognises that young people's involvement in arts, recreation, cultural and sporting activities is not only an important part of their personal development, but contributes strongly to South Australia's social, cultural, economic and political landscape.

YACSA believes that a vibrant and sustainable youth arts, sport, culture and recreation environment, including the live music scene, must by necessity be accessible, affordable, inclusive and participatory. This includes implementing measures to ensure that young people who experience disadvantage due to their culture, language, identity, economic situation or ability have equitable access to these activities. This can be achieved by providing free and low-cost participation and/or admission costs, ensuring adequate transport options, providing culturally appropriate support and resources and ensuring accessibility. It may also mean providing opportunities for both structured and unstructured recreational options, such as non-team-based or membership-based sporting activities. YACSA strongly supports the resourcing and supporting of young people to plan and stage their own events, and ensuring that young people are involved in the planning, design and implementation of recreational events, programs and initiatives.

Regular involvement in sport and other physical recreational activities contributes strongly to young people's health and wellbeing. Young people are the most physically active of all age groups, with 39% of young people aged 14 to 24 involved in organised sport or physical activities.¹

YACSA recognises that a range of activity and art-making is undertaken by young people which may be deemed as offences against public and private property. The location, form and the intention of the artwork or activity must be taken into consideration. For example, there are different types of graffiti, from tags to large murals to stickers and stencil work, and these all may have content which empowers, delights, offends or incites and therefore should be responded to in separate ways. YACSA further recognises the role that art, sport, cultural and recreational activities have to play in the wider debate about public space and who has a right to use it and be in it.

YACSA is committed to:

- Recognising and supporting the diversity of youth cultures and subcultures
- Encouraging opportunities for young people to create, participate in and contribute to South Australia's identity and cultural life through artistic and physical expression
- Advocating for improved access to a variety of sporting and recreational activities for all young people
- Advocating for training and employment pathways for young people in recreation, sports, culture and the arts
- Recognising the legitimacy of funding for artistic expression within formal and informal settings as a medium to challenge the established social and institutional norms of South Australian society
- Encouraging sports, arts and recreational activities that assist in maintaining cultural links for Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people
- Encouraging cross-cultural and mixed media arts, cultural and recreational activities for young people
- Promoting the active involvement and support for young people in decision-making about youth arts, sports, cultural and recreational programs
- Advocating for young people's access to arts, sports, recreational and cultural events by providing low-cost, subsidised or free admission as a matter of course
- Acknowledging the live music scene as an integral recreational activity for many young people and as a key component of South Australia's cultural development
- Encouraging and promoting the participation and development of young performers, artists and musicians through cultural, recreational and artistic events
- Advocating for resourcing and support for young people to initiate, create, stage and evaluate their own music, arts and cultural events

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005, *Involvement in organised sport and physical activity*, Australia, cat. no. 6285.0, Canberra, p. 3.



Arts, sport, culture and recreation

- Advocating that recreational facilities are built in well-lit, safe areas for young people that have disability access and are close to public transport
- Advocating for the establishment of no-smoking regulations across all live entertainment and recreational venues including pubs, clubs and restaurants
- Advocating for support for young people to participate in a variety of entertainment and live music events by organising and resourcing drug-free, under-age and all-ages gigs
- Promoting an increase in the number and type of legal art and graffiti sites and walls, with young artists participating in decision-making about content and images
- Advocating for committed resourcing to implement the South Australian Youth Recreation Strategy and to provide a grants scheme or resourcing to local government and non-government youth service providers for initiatives stemming from the strategy

For further information

Corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Education
- Employment
- Income and poverty
- Justice and legal issues for young people
- Mental health
- Perceptions of young people
- Physical health
- Political engagement
- Public space, private space
- Relationships with others
- Road safety and transport
- Training
- Youth participation

Publications:

- Australia Council 2004, H2W2: *How to do an arts project, where to get help*, Surry Hills, www.ozco.gov.au
- Halsey, M. and Young, A. 2002, *Graffiti Culture Research Project*, KESAB, www.kesab.asn.au/graffiti
- Young People and The Arts Australia 2004, *The toolkit for arts advocates: Effective campaigning on a shoe string*, North Adelaide, www.ypaa.net

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Political engagement

YACSA is committed to encouraging participation through young people's active involvement in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Youth participation in decision-making by extension includes creating opportunities for young people to articulate their political concerns to decision-makers, question policy and influence political debate. YACSA further recognises that for many young people, participation in mainstream political discourse is not ideal and that young people also create their own mechanisms for political activities and comment away from mainstream debate. Activism may also be an important part of young people's personal development. YACSA acknowledges that young people's contributions through activism are a strong and valuable way of achieving social development and change.

Young people are expected to assume many responsibilities in a society that often devalues their contribution and de-recognises their position as stakeholders in the political process. This is especially so for young people who are experiencing social disadvantage, whose voices are rarely heard in political debate and whose issues and interests may be ignored and even denounced for political gain. YACSA strongly endorses the importance of ensuring that equitable measures are put in place so that political processes are accessible to all young people.

YACSA has for many years promoted lowering the voting age, making voting voluntary for young people from 16 years of age. YACSA's report *A Piece of the Action* recommended that 16 and 17 year olds have the option of registering to vote in both state and federal elections in order to promote community inclusiveness and foster young people's active citizenship.¹ This recommendation has been broadly and consistently supported by the youth sector and is in keeping with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for opportunities and support for young people to participate in decision-making and political debate as a matter of due process
- Recognising young people's diversity of political activities, both in mainstream political debates, in their own communities, and on issues and interests that they raise
- Facilitating the constructive representation of young people's issues in political processes and lobbying for the increased involvement of young people in decision-making processes at all levels
- Advocating for the establishment of processes that enable young people to contribute to their communities and to the political processes that define the structure of their lives
- Advocating for the involvement of young people in the whole policy development process, not simply the consultation period
- Advocating for the provision of programs for young people that facilitate their understanding of, and engagement with, political processes
- Advocating for young people aged 16 and 17 years to have the option to register to vote in federal, state and local government elections
- Advocating to ensure that young people are afforded every possible opportunity to enrol to vote, including overturning the federal decision to close the electoral roll as soon as an election is announced

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Arts, sport, culture and recreation
- Discrimination against young people
- Income and poverty
- Perceptions of young people
- Youth participation

¹ Youth Affairs Council of South Australia 1996, *A piece of the action: Young people's views on voting, politics and participation*, Adelaide, p. 8



Political engagement

Resources:

- Youth Affairs Council of South Australia 1996, *A piece of the action: Young people's views on voting, politics and participation*, Adelaide.
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and the Office for Youth 2004, *Creating change in your community: A handbook for young people*, Government of Victoria, Melbourne.

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Youth participation

YACSA believes that all young people have a fundamental right to participate in and contribute to all aspects of community life, particularly in decision-making which impacts on their lives. We acknowledge that many young people are considerably active in their communities in innumerable ways despite leading busy and complex lives, with 26.8% of 18 to 24 year olds nationally involved in volunteering.¹

Young people are increasingly being recognised as stakeholders and leaders, not only in relation to youth issues but to wider political, economic and social issues that affect them and the communities in which they live. Their involvement is vital in ensuring relevant, forward-thinking and representative policy, programs, actions and services.

YACSA is committed to promoting and supporting youth participation, a concept which strives to recognise young people's contributions, and to offer new and varied opportunities and support for young people to participate, both formally and informally. Youth participation can take place in many different settings and ways. Young people involved in youth participation activities may, for example, be:

- Providing advice to governments, businesses and organisations through committee, board and working party involvement
- Helping services to design, deliver, monitor and evaluate programs or events
- Active in arts, sports, cultural or recreational activities
- Providing education, information or support to peers
- Participating in or conducting consultations
- Involved in grant-making and philanthropic decision-making activities
- Volunteering for established community-based organisations
- Active in lobby, activist or advocacy bodies
- Fundraising for non-government or charitable organisations

Meaningful youth participation activities provide a chance for young people to build skills, be supported and mentored, network and develop leadership skills. They are also a means of engaging young people, fostering partnerships and achieving personal goals. Meaningful youth participation activities ensure that all young people are valued, informed about their involvement, enjoy what they are doing and consider it to be relevant and beneficial. Young people are appropriately supported and resourced to participate, and have ownership of the experience. Further, meaningful youth participation ensures that those working with young people do so in a respectful, culturally appropriate and accountable way, and allow young people to engage at their own capacity, skill and interest levels.

YACSA is committed to:

- Advocating for equitable access and the removal of barriers to participation for all young people across South Australia
- Advocating for a broad range of youth participation opportunities for young people, including consumer participation through health promotion activities, service and program planning and evaluations
- Supporting, modelling and promoting participation strategies which provide for meaningful involvement in decision-making by young people
- Acknowledging that young people participate in a variety of ways, and promoting participation strategies that support these
- Recognising young people for the time, effort, knowledge, skills and expertise they provide when participating
- Recognising and valuing young people's contributions in ways which are significant and beneficial to young people
- Acknowledging that young people's participation is not only a mechanism for young people to learn new skills, but for others to learn from young people about new skills and ways of thinking
- Advocating for all young people to be supported in their participation as standard practice. This includes developing culturally and developmentally appropriate and diverse means of supporting and training young people to participate, encompassing financial and material support as necessary

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002, *Voluntary work 2000*, cat. 4441.0, Canberra, p. 13.



Youth participation

- Advocating for the development, support and resourcing of a variety of student participation models across schools
- Advocating to ensure that young people's involvement in youth participation strategies are always grounded in their choice to participate, and that they not be obligated, compelled or coerced to contribute
- Recognising that young people's participation and volunteering activities are of distinct value to both young people and organisations in their own right, and should not be treated as a substitute for paid employment

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Education
- Discrimination against young people
- Perceptions of young people
- Political engagement
- Relationships with others

Resources:

- Ferrier, F., Roos, I. and Long, M. 2004, *Passions, people and appreciation: Making volunteering work for young people*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Canberra.
- Sagers, S., Palmer, D., Royce, P., Wilson, L. and Charlton, A. 2004, *Alive and motivated: Young people, participation and local government*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Canberra.

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The youth sector is part of the broader community service and health sector in South Australia. The sector consists of several related and interdependent components including youth specific, community, education and training services, local government programs and youth service components of mainstream human services.

Young people have a right to high quality services and a voice in their operation, and YACSA is supportive of measures that seek to involve young people as service users in all aspects of service planning, delivery and evaluation.

YACSA recognises that effective advocacy in the interests of young people and the youth sector requires the building and maintenance of alliances with a broad range of human services and community interests, including local, state and federal government, non-government organisations and the private sector. YACSA works consistently to build on relationships across government and to promote the youth sector perspective in government policy and program decision-making. We are supportive of the Common Ground agreement, which sets out principles for partnership between the community sector and state government.

YACSA also recognises the importance of ensuring that up-to-date directories of South Australian youth services are widely available across the youth sector and across government. In this way, government planning processes may take into account existing youth services and programs, as well as organisational expertise, to minimise 'doubling up' on programs or the creation of surplus pilot programs. Such an approach also facilitates the support and growth of already existing services with expert knowledge within their geographical and service frameworks.

The disparity in remuneration between non-government and local and state government workers with young people has been a growing issue for the youth sector, with many non-government youth services finding it difficult to attract and retain skilled and experienced personnel. Concurrently, inadequate funding across the youth sector often results in increased expectations and workloads for staff. Further, rising costs of public liability insurance impact on the youth sector's ability to deliver programs and services, and competitive tendering for funding has also sometimes created barriers to collaboration and information-sharing across the youth sector. These issues are strongly compounded in regional areas, where staff and service choices are limited and there is a high turn-over of staff. Workers across South Australia report an increasing complexity of young people's issues and an increase in challenging behaviours.

YACSA remains committed to ensuring that the youth sector is appropriately resourced in order to meet a growing and complex demand for services from young people and their families. Good services require secure resourcing arrangements, an effective planning framework and support from the community. It is imperative that resources allocated to the youth sector are consistent with the range of young people's needs. YACSA also recommends that both government and non-government grant-makers take collaborative action to maximise the efficient use of resources within the youth and broader community services sector, and to ensure the most effective delivery of services to young people.

YACSA is committed to:

- Building and maintaining mutually respectful and inclusive relationships across government in the interests of improving outcomes for all young people
- Supporting the capacity of the youth sector to work across federal, state and local funding models and their differing philosophies and intended outcomes
- Supporting the youth sector to involve young people in decision-making regarding policy and program planning, implementation and evaluation
- Promoting and supporting youth sector cohesion and collaboration
- Advocating for the non-government youth sector to participate in government decision-making regarding all aspects of youth service provision
- Advocating for the establishment of consistent age-based eligibility criteria across the youth sector
- Advocating for clear pathways between youth-specific and general services, particularly in the mental health sector
- Advocating for the development of appropriate and consistent service agreements between the South Australian government and the youth sector
- Advocating for the development of sustainable funding models that promote flexibility and accountability, which allow the sector to respond holistically to young people's diverse needs
- Advocating for an overall increase in resourcing for youth services and programs in recognition of increased demand, greater complexity of need and mounting operational costs



Youth sector

- Advocating for appropriate and sustained funding to support and expand youthworker networks across South Australia
- Advocating for improved access to youth-specific services for young people, especially young people in regional areas
- Supporting the youth sector in the appropriate engagement of volunteers, including young volunteers
- Encouraging cultural diversity within the youth sector, and supporting the cultural needs of workers within their work environment
- Advocating for an appropriate and diverse range of professional training and development opportunities for the youth sector, provided by the state government
- Supporting the youth sector through the development of resources pertaining to service delivery, best practice, policies and procedures and codes of ethics
- Advocating for parity in salary levels across the non-government sector in line with the public sector

For further information

See also corresponding YACSA policy positions:

- Youth participation

Resources:

- Human Services Peaks Forum 2005, *Common Ground*, South Australian Council of Social Service, Department of Families and Communities, Department of Health, Adelaide, www.sacoss.org.au/finalcommonground.pdf

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