



NSW Youth Advisory Council

Annual Report 2009

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YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

NEW SOUTH WALES

The Hon. Peter Primrose MLC
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Youth
Minister for Volunteering
Level 30 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

1 June 2010

Dear Minister

It gives me great pleasure to present you with the 2009 New South Wales Youth Advisory Council Annual Report.

The Council is fulfilling its functions as set out in the *Youth Advisory Council Act 1989*. This is reflected in the variety of Council activities throughout 2009.

I would also like to thank the former members of the Council for their work and for the role they have played in ensuring that the Council continues to provide a link between the young people of New South Wales and the NSW Government.

Yours sincerely

Travis Holland
Chair

Role of the Council

The NSW Youth Advisory Council (the Council) was established in 1989, under the *Youth Advisory Council Act 1989* (the Act), to ensure that young people participate in the development of Government policies and programs that concern them. The Act defines young people as ‘persons who are of, or over, 12 years of age and under 25 years of age’.

The Council has the following statutory functions:

- to advise the Minister on the planning, development, integration and implementation of Government policies and programs concerning young persons
- to consult with young persons, community groups and Government authorities on issues and policies concerning young persons
- to monitor and evaluate legislation and Government policies and programs concerning young persons, and to recommend changes if required
- to conduct forums, approved by the Minister, on issues of interest to young persons
- to collect, analyse and provide the Minister with information on issues and policies concerning young persons.

Administration of the Council

The Hon. Graham West, MP, administered the *Youth Advisory Council Act 1989* from September 2008 to December 2009 as NSW Minister for Youth. In December 2009, the Hon. Peter Primrose, MLC, was appointed as the NSW Minister for Youth.

In 2009 the Minister for Youth transferred administrative responsibility for the Council from the Communities Division in the Department of Community Services to the Commission for Children and Young People. In July 2009, the Council and the Commission became part of the new super agency, Communities NSW. Mr Stephen Robertson, Director of Influencing, Commission for Children and Young People, was the ex-officio member of the Council in 2009. Secretariat support was provided by Mr Christopher Hellmundt and Ms Cat Wright.

Membership of the Council

In 2009 the NSW Youth Advisory Council consisted of 12 part-time members appointed by the Minister and the ex-officio member.

Under the Act, at least half the Council’s 12 members must be under the age of 25 years at the time of their appointment. In 2009 all members of the Council were under the age of 25 years.

Council members are appointed in their own right, rather than as representatives of organisations or groups. The Minister seeks a Council that is broadly representative of young people in New South Wales. In determining membership,

the Minister seeks a balance from metropolitan, regional and rural areas; young men and women; Indigenous young people; young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and people with experience in a range of youth and community organisations.

Council Members in 2009

Ms Amanda Scott (Chair)

Windang

Age: 22 years

Amanda is a Commerce student at the University of Wollongong, and is a volunteer Surf Life Saver with Windang Surf Life Saving Club. She has coordinated many programs within the organisation, including programs geared towards international students, community education, youth development and leadership. Amanda also volunteers with Youth off the Streets and Southern Youth and Family Services, acting as a facilitator for their development programs. In 2005, she was the Wollongong Council's Young Citizen of the Year and Youth Lifesaver of the Year, and in 2008 she attended the 2020 Youth Summit held in Canberra. Amanda has been a member of the NSW Youth Advisory Council since 2007, and in 2009 represented the Council on the NSW Student Volunteering Program Reference Group.

Mr Emre Mehmet (Deputy Chair)

Birrong

Age: 19 years

Emre is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Accounting at the University of Technology Sydney, through a Cooperative Scholarship. Emre finished high school in 2008 at Homebush Boys High School. He was a member of his high school Student Representative Council (SRC) and a member of the NSW SRC. Emre was on the Auburn Youth Advisory Council in 2006 and 2007, and, in 2009, he represented the Youth Advisory Council on the NSW Youth Week Committee.

Ms Tjirra Francis

Dorrigo

Age: 20 years

Tjirra is currently studying for a Bachelor of Nursing at Southern Cross University, with the aim of continuing on to a Bachelor of Midwifery, and is involved with the University's Student Mentoring Program. Tjirra was a member of her school's Student Representative Council for six years and was School Captain in her final year. In 2007 she was awarded the RSL Young Achievers Award. In 2008 and 2009 Tjirra represented the Youth Advisory Council on the Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health Advisory Board, the Youth Health Priority Taskforce and the Youth Health Policy Reference Group.

Ms Krysten Gers

Broken Hill

Age: 19 years

Krysten completed her HSC in 2008 at Broken Hill High School. She was a member of her Student Representative Council for four years and was the Secretary in 2008. Krysten is a carer for her younger brother who has autism, is a member of Young Carers Australia and is the Youth Ambassador for Headspace, a National Youth Mental Health Foundation. Krysten was also a member of the Youth Advisory Council in 2008.

Ms Helen Machalias

Armidale

Age: 21 years

Helen has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in English from the University of Sydney. She has worked as a Council Youth Officer and a Project Officer with Youthlinx. She was runner up in the Zonta Young Woman in Public Affairs Award and received a Young Voice of Achievement Award from the NSW Department of Education and Training for her commitment to the creative arts. Helen has been involved with the Inspire Foundation as a 'Cash for Comments' Writer and Action Partner, and in 2009 was a member of the steering committee that developed the new youth drug information website 'Between the Lines'. She volunteers at CarriageWorks Arts Centre and Vibewire, and is a member of the Sydney Theatre Company's inaugural Youth Advisory Panel. Helen has been a member of the Youth Advisory Council since 2008, and in 2009 represented the Youth Advisory Council on the Youth Action and Policy Association's Youth Participation Project Steering Committee.

Ms Maggie Malak

Camperdown

Age: 22 years

Maggie is currently studying for a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Social Work at the Australian Catholic University. She previously attended TAFE and completed a Certificate IV in Youth Work and a Certificate II and III in Children's Services. Maggie has been a young carer since the age of six and is a member and media representative of Young Carers NSW and Carers Australia. She is also a Camp Leader for Young Carer Camps. In 2009 Maggie represented the Youth Advisory Council on the Young Offenders Advisory Council.

Mr Matt Petherbridge

Weston

Age: 21 years

Matt is currently studying for a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Newcastle. In addition to his studies, Matt writes on a freelance basis for several small-print publications, volunteers for MusicNSW and is currently writing five albums for the little known musical enigma 'Rod Steele'. His passion for music and involvement with the Cessnock Youth Entertainment Committee led to his being awarded the 2008 Cessnock LGA Young Citizen of the Year. In 2009 Matt represented the Youth Advisory Council on the Indent Advisory Committee.

Ms Kaitlyn Carlia**Camden Park Age: 19 years**

Kaitlyn is currently studying for a Bachelor of Media and Communication in Marketing and Advertising and a Bachelor of Creative Writing at the University of Wollongong. During her time at school, she was a member of the Drama Committee, the Social Justice Committee and the Student Representative Council. Kaitlyn has always been passionate about the problems and issues concerning young people, particularly in her area. Before being appointed to the Youth Advisory Council, she was involved in a number of community projects, such as the local Youth Café, and many music events. In 2009 Kaitlyn represented the Youth Advisory Council on the Youth Action and Policy Association Youth Participation Project Steering Committee and the NSW Youth Week Committee.

Mr Jacob Wray**Moruya Age: 17 years**

Jacob is currently undertaking his HSC at Moruya High School. For the past two years he has been involved with the Department of Education and Training's (DET) Student Equity Advisory Team, a representative on the Priority Schools Program – Illawarra South East and a member of his local Youth Council. In 2009 Jacob represented the Youth Advisory Council on the DET Student Volunteering Reference Group.

Mr Samir Kinger**Wattle Grove Age: 16 years**

Samir is currently a Year 11 student at Sydney Boys High School. Samir is the Chairperson of the Liverpool Youth Council, an organisation he has been involved with since 2006. He was elected as the Premier of the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament and is also the President of his school's Student Representative Council. In 2007, Samir was a part of the organising committee of 'Yo-West', a youth initiated conference aiming to address the issues faced by young people in Western Sydney. In 2009, Samir represented the Youth Advisory Council on the Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health Advisory Board, the NSW Youth Health Policy Reference Group, and the Youth Action and Policy Association Youth Participation Project Steering Committee.

Mr Travis Holland**Hill Top Age: 23 years**

Travis is a Communications and Media Studies student at the University of Wollongong and an active member of his community in the Southern Highlands. He has been a member of the National Youth Roundtable and a variety of local community service organisations, including the Southern Highlands Foundation youth programs and University of Wollongong Rotaract Club. In 2009, Travis represented the Youth Advisory Council on the Youth Action and Policy Association Grants Committee.

Ms Katy Brownless

Annandale

Age: 23 years

Katy has been a member for Amnesty International's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Committee, Women's Action Group and NSW Speaker's Network. She has contributed to projects at the Aids Council of NSW and the Young Women's Project. She has assisted Family Planning's 'Same Difference' Panel Speakers Program and volunteers at fundraisers for 'Twenty10' LGBTQ Youth Service. Katy also has worked as a Youth Worker in crisis care for the Guardian Youth Care and as a Disability/Community/ Residential Support worker at Pegasus Healthcare. She also undertook a traineeship in Disability/Community Support Work and continued on to a Diploma of Community Welfare. In 2009 Katy chaired the Youth Advisory Council's Homelessness Forum Steering Committee.

Work of the Council

Under the Youth Advisory Council Act 1989, the key function of the Council is to provide current and relevant advice to the Minister for Youth on issues affecting young people in New South Wales. In developing its Work Plan for 2009, six issues were identified: homelessness, rural transport, education wellbeing, employment, mental health and young carers.

The Council reported to the Minister on four of these issues:

1. Youth Homelessness.
2. Improving Rural Transport for Young People.
3. Education and Wellbeing in NSW Schools.
4. Employment opportunities.

In 2009 the Council fulfilled its functions as specified under the Act through a range of activities. The Council hosted forums and youth consultations, attended seminars and conferences, and conducted research that assisted it to become better informed on these issues and enabled it to provide considered advice to the Minister.

Members represented the Council on a number of Government and non-government committees and gave presentations at conferences, seminars and forums. The Council also met with a range of key people to address the issues identified in the Work Plan.

The Council also participated in recruiting the Commissioner for Children and Young People in June 2009.

These activities are detailed in the report below.

1. Youth Homelessness

Following a recommendation from the 2008 Homelessness Summit, which called for a youth-specific Forum on homelessness, the Hon. Graham West, MP, Minister for Youth, requested that the Council conduct a Forum to discuss the prevention of youth homelessness.

During the development of the 2009 NSW Youth Homelessness Forum more than 100 young people were consulted face-to-face and online. Their feedback was used as a basis for the resulting discussion. The Forum was held on Wednesday 5 August, bringing together 40 young people and 20 adults, including workers and representatives from peak organisations and Government.

The young people attending the Forum were aged between 13-23 years, from across New South Wales, all with different experiences of homelessness. A number of young people, all of whom had experienced unstable housing situations, facilitated the day. They were trained prior to the Forum and supported by Council members, who scribed and offered general support when necessary. Council members also undertook training in minute-taking and supporting facilitators. The result was a Youth Homelessness Forum that was developed and run by young people, for young people.

The Forum was supported by a steering committee comprising a range of stakeholders: the Youth Advisory Council, Commission for the Children and Young People, Inspire Foundation, Youth Accommodation Association, Salvation Army, the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, Housing NSW and Office of the Minister for Youth.

The outcomes of the Forum were compiled in the Youth Homelessness Forum Report, which was presented to the Minister for Youth in September 2009. The report outlines the findings of the Forum about possible causes of youth homelessness and recommends initiatives to prevent this. The report also informed the Council's submission to the national framework for protecting children 'Protecting Children is Everyone's Business'. A copy of the Youth Homelessness Forum Report is available on the NSW Government 'Youth NSW' website www.youth.nsw.gov.au/yac.

2. Improving Rural Transport for Young People

The Council maintains strong connections with young people in rural areas through member networks and consultations. Young drivers have featured on the Council's Work Plan since 2007, and the Council has been represented on the RTA Young Driver Safety Committee. Transport disadvantage is an issue that is consistently raised and, as a result, the Council recognised a need to increase transport options for young people in rural areas.

Council members met with Ms Anne Morphett, Senior Policy Advisor, Road Safety, NRMA and Ms Anne Deans, Chief Executive, YouthSafe, to gain insights into safety for young drivers and the impacts of driving restrictions, particularly on young rural drivers.

The Council met with the Minister for Transport and Roads, the Hon. David Campbell, MP, to discuss the following issues: transport to regional universities, concessional fares on public transport, transport options in rural and regional areas, the impact of limited transport in rural areas on both unemployment and anti-social behaviour, licensing requirements for learner and provisional drivers and accessing effective driver training.

3. Education and Wellbeing in NSW Schools

The Council identified a number of concerns about the wellbeing of young people within the NSW school education system. The NSW Department of Education and Training's (DET) Welfare Policy, the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education curriculum and the welfare policies of other states were reviewed, and the Council met with Ms Elizabeth Callister, Director, Student Welfare Directorate, DET, to discuss the current student welfare policy and its review.

Members of the Council also attended the Sydney South West Area Health Service's launch of its Youth Health Plan. This increased Council members' awareness of the nutrition and health issues faced by young people in New South Wales. Two Council members, both of whom currently attend high school, conducted informal consultations with fellow school students. The Council also met with Nathan Cassar, a year 11 student who developed a campaign to combat bullying in schools.

The Council's advice to the Minister focused on the creation of a positive, supportive and practical environment for students, which would make them feel comfortable and make going to school more enjoyable. The Council identified five main areas of concern including: improving nutrition, health and wellbeing; initiatives for better learning; tackling bullying and harassment; initiatives for creating a better recreational atmosphere; and aiding transitions from junior to senior years, and from school to the workforce.

4. Employment Opportunities

The global financial crisis has had an impact on employment opportunities for young people in New South Wales. Council members identified the need for long term solutions to help engage with this issue, including ensuring that training for young people leads to employment opportunities and a long-term career path.

Young Carers and Mental Health

The Council continued its focus on young carers and youth mental health. Members of the Council further developed their understanding of the issues in a number of ways, including meeting with Mr Steve Harris, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Community Adolescent Mental Health Service, and attending conferences such as the Carers NSW Conference and the Sixth National Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference and World Children of Parents with a Mental Illness Conference.

Members of the Council contributed to the development of the NSW Youth Health Policy through their representation on the Advancement of Adolescent Health Advisory Board and NSW Youth Health Policy Reference Group.

Subcommittees

Youth Week in NSW Young People's Advisory Committee

The NSW Youth Week Young People's Advisory Committee, is a subcommittee of the NSW Youth Advisory Council, which advises the Government on the coordination of Youth Week in NSW.

In New South Wales, Youth Week has developed from its humble beginnings, in 1989, as a NSW Government initiative involving small numbers of young people in a few local events and activities across metropolitan Sydney, into a large coordinated effort involving more than 900 local events and activities across the State.

Approximately 4500 young people were involved in the planning and management of Youth Week 2009. More than 170 000 young people participated in the activities and events.

Youth Week in New South Wales provides young people throughout the State with an opportunity to participate in their communities through events, programs, forums and debates. It is organised by young people, for young people.

Meetings with Government Ministers

In 2009 the Council met with the Hon. Graham West, MP, Minister for Youth to discuss the issues outlined above. The Council also met with the Hon. David Campbell, MP, Minister for Transport and Roads to discuss the issue of transport disadvantage for young people in rural areas.

Council meetings

In 2009 the Council met on 24 and 25 April, 24 May, 14 June, 4 and 5 July, 30 August, 27 September, 8 November and 2 December.

The Council met with:

Reynato Reodica	Executive Officer, Youth Action and Policy Association
Jemma Hollonds	Senior Policy Officer, Social Justice and Native Title Unit, Australian Human Rights Commission
Elizabeth Callister	Director, Student Welfare Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training
Steve Harris	Clinical Nurse Consultant, Community Adolescent Mental Health Service
Anne Morphett	Senior Policy Advisor, Road Safety, NRMA
Anne Deans	Chief Executive, YouthSafe
Susan Calvert	Acting Director, Strategy and Project Delivery, Department of Premier and Cabinet
Ryan Lodge	Member, NSW Student Representative Council

Committees

The Council was represented on the following committees in 2009:

- Youth Week in NSW Young People's Advisory Committee
- Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health Advisory Board
- Youth Action and Policy Association Youth Participation Project Steering Committee
- Indent Advisory Committee
- Children and Young People's Health Priority Taskforce
- Student Volunteering Program Reference Group
- Young Offenders Advisory Council
- Emergency Service Forum Committee
- Youth Health Plan Reference Group.

Conferences, Seminars and Forums

Council members presented and/or facilitated at the following conferences, seminars, forums and meetings:

- Sydney South West Area Health Service Youth Health Plan 2009-2013 launch
- NSW Youth Homelessness Forum
- Money Stuff Youth Forum for Fair Trading Week
- NSW School Representative Council – new 2010 members meeting.

Council members attended the following conferences, seminars, forums and meetings:

- Youth Health Policy Consultation Forum
- Carers NSW Conference
- NSW Road Toll Roundtable
- Youth Peace Parliament
- Emerging Health Policy Research Conference
- Sydney South West Area Health Service Mental Health Outreach meeting
- Young Driver Safety Forum
- Sixth National Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference and World Children of Parents with a Mental Illness Conference
- South West Sydney Youth Unemployment Meeting
- Department of Education and Training Cyberbullying Forum.

Training

Council members undertook the following training:

- Facilitation Skills
- Supporting facilitators
- Taking forum session minutes
- Media.



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