The Youth Action & Policy Association is the peak community group working in the interests of young people and youth services in NSW.

YAPA strives to achieve social justice for young people including the appropriate provision of services for young people.

The role of YAPA is to:
- Monitor and respond to government policies and proposals impacting on young people
- Promote and advocate on issues affecting young people and youth services
- Bring young people and youth workers together to act on issues affecting them
- Work to raise a positive profile of young people in the media and in the community
- Provide training, forums and conferences to young people and youth workers
- Provide information and referral
- Produce a range of resources, publications and newsletters.

**Funding**

YAPA receives core funding from the NSW Department of Community Services to perform this role, as well as separate core funding for the operations of YAPA’s Western Sydney Office.

YAPA also receives funding from a range of other funding providers. In 2008 this included:
- Youth Participation Grants Program
  - Communities Division, NSW
  - Department of Community Services

YAPA also receives income from membership fees, training and conference fees.
FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

What an exciting year it has been to work with the Board of Governance of YAPA. I would like to start by expressing my sincere thanks to each of the members of the Board who, each meeting, bring enthusiasm and great ideas which continue to propel YAPA forwards. Despite circumstances lowering the number of members of the Board, those who were able to remain on have worked hard to ensure that things continue to get done. This year especially, the staff and Board have been working hard towards making YAPA a stronger organisation.

It has been very exciting to get a view of YAPA from a Board perspective and to be able to see all of the great work YAPA is doing for young people and youth workers across NSW. Of particular note is YAPA’s work on youth justice issues. Advocacy, partnerships and lobbying have been occurring all year to ensure the best outcomes for young people. Issues such as young people in remand and overcrowding in prisons have been high on the agenda in the work YAPA is doing.

For youth workers, YAPA continues to run Survival training, which is both for new workers, and those who feel they need a refresher on the basics of youth work. The feedback from these courses, from both presenters and participants, is consistently great, demonstrating the value of this important training program.

YAPA reaches out to youth workers outside Sydney with the annual Rural Youth Issues Forum, held in 2008 in Coffs Harbour, in conjunction with a Survival training course. All reports indicate that these events were well received, and it is always appreciated when a peak is able to travel to regional areas.

**Combined with YAPA’s online content, I feel that youth workers have a really valuable source of information and discussion available to them and would like to commend YAPA for this work.**

I am looking forward to *unleash*, the new youth publication being launched by YAPA in 2009. A lot of hard work and consultation has gone into making a magazine that should be very engaging and relevant for young people, and which will partner nicely with *YAPRap*, which continues to be a very helpful resource for workers, not only in NSW, but across Australia. Combined with YAPA’s online content, I feel that youth workers have a really
valuable source of information and discussion available to them and would like to commend YAPA for this work.

Finally, I would like to mention the strategic planning process currently being undertaken by the Board and staff at YAPA, and thank all services and youth workers who filled in surveys earlier in the year. This process will really allow YAPA to step ahead in the work it does and strongly represent and advocate for youth and youth workers coming into the next elections.

It has been an exciting, and eye-opening experience working with the Board of YAPA, and I hope to continue my involvement in many ways in the future. To all Board members, staff, youth workers, and young people, thank you for a productive and engaging year.

Brandon Bear
YAPA Co-Chairperson
**Our Board of Governance in 2008**

**Elected for 12 months to May 2008**

**Chairing Panel**
Rebecca Fowles, Cessnock Youthlinx, Samaritans Youth Services
Armina Soemino, YAPA youth member (from March)
Sharmila Falzon, Young Christian Workers (until December)
Joel Clark, YAPA youth member (until March)

**Secretary**
Armina Soemino, YAPA youth member (until March)

**Treasurer**
Meredith Turnbull, Twenty10 GLBT Youth Support

**Ordinary Members**
Leizsha Clissold, Fusion Youth Services
Fiona Miller, Gosford City Council
Lisa Ronneberg, Maitland Dungog Youth Project, Samaritans Youth Services
Lakin Agnew, Kurri Kurri Community Centre (from February)

**Aboriginal Member**
Vacant

**Elected for 12 months from May 2008**

**Chairing Panel**
Brandon Bear, Youth Accommodation Association
Rebecca Fowles, Cessnock Youthlinx, Samaritans Youth Services
Armina Soemino, YAPA youth member

**Secretary**
Arjun Bisen, YAPA youth member (from August)

**Treasurer**
Michelle Baldacchino, Youth off the Streets (until September)

**Ordinary Members**
Lakin Agnew, Kurri Kurri Community Centre
Nicky Johnson, Stretch-a-Family
Fiona Morrison, Gosford City Council
Sonja Golovchenko, WESDARC

**Aboriginal Member**
Martin Drennan, YAPA youth member
AT	ENDEECE AT MEETINGS OF THE BOARD

For accountability purposes, the Board has resolved to publish the attendance of Board members at meetings for the information of YAPA members.

Below is the number of meetings attended by each Board member in a 12 month period, based on the Annual General Meeting elections for 2007 and 2008 years. The total column represents the number of meetings that the Board member could have attended.

YAPA wishes to thank all Board members for their contribution throughout the year and acknowledges the individual circumstances that have made participation difficult from time to time.

To May 2008

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In 2008, YAPA continued to work hard towards achieving social justice for young people in NSW, and a better deal for the youth services that work with them.

The election of the Rudd government in late 2007 came with an election promise to fund a fully independent, non-government peak body for youth affairs at the national level. This funding will mean YAPA will not need to dedicate as many resources to national issues, and so YAPA worked with youth services and young people throughout 2008 to ensure that the promise of an independent peak was delivered in full. The success of this campaign was realised with the announcement of funding for the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) as the youth affairs peak. Thanks to all those who contributed to this success!

YAPA will continue to contribute to issues at the national level through our ongoing participation in the AYAC and the working relationships we developed with the federal government representatives throughout 2008, including our representation at the Australia 2020 Youth Summit.

With our focus on NSW, we continued to fight for better funding for youth services across the state. We continued to work on funding issues under the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) to ensure the DoCS remained committed to CSGP-funded youth services, in spite of DoCS’s increasing focus on child protection. Despite the difficulties created by the Inquiry into Child Protection Services throughout 2008, YAPA continued its work during the year and into 2009, in putting the best case forward for much-needed funding for CSGP.

Building upon work done by the Social Policy Research Centre, YAPA also released its survey report “Poverty and disadvantage among young Australians”. The report shows results of a survey of 657 young people in NSW, asking them about their experiences in a number of areas that would indicate some form of deprivation, service exclusion, economic exclusion, disengagement and psychological deprivation. The report aims to add evidence to discussions about the varying needs of young people in NSW and significant hardships faced by them – which goes beyond just the amount of money they might earn in a week.

The YAPA Youth Participation Grants Program was rolled out across the state, providing all NSW young people with the opportunity to apply for grants of up to $5,500 to run youth-led projects that would benefit their local communities. It has been a pleasure to see what innovative and effective small projects young people with assorted skills and experiences can achieve with a little bit of support and resources.
In 2008, we said goodbye to our Western Sydney Regional Youth Development Officer, Kylie Gordon-Wilkins, and our Policy and Training Officer, John Ferguson. Each had been with the organisation for about two and a half years and had contributed a lot towards the success of YAPA throughout this period.

We welcomed our new Policy and Training Officer, Thom Scire, whose experience with young people in southern and western Sydney shone through as he pulled together our biennial Young People’s Conference. This year’s theme, Participation into Action! demonstrated our desire for young people to be supported and resourced to get active and make a difference in whatever ways they might choose. Feedback from both young people and workers supporting them indicate this was one of our most successful young people’s conferences ever.

YAPA also continued to work well with external organisations on issues of shared concern. In particular, YAPA entered into a project partnership with the Local Community Services Association and NSW Family Services to deliver the Targeted CSGP Capacity Building Project. As the three peaks working with the majority of Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) funded organisations, we recognise that many organisations are challenged to find the time, resources and expertise to develop their governance processes in an environment where the number of accountability tasks seem ever-increasing. This partnership project offers hands on, intensive assistance for CSGP-funded organisations to build membership, recruit skilled board or management committee members, develop governance skills, practices and systems, and so on.

YAPA also began to lay the groundwork for an exciting new experiment to be launched during 2009. YAPA’s new youth magazine, *unleash*, will focus squarely on issues of concern to young people and provide an avenue for young people 12-20 to have their say, find out about issues, learn stuff and especially to be inspired to get involved in youth action. The immense contributions and leadership of our Editor Jess Carter in the development of this concept is highly appreciated by us all.

2008 was the first time that I was at the YAPA helm for the first dawn of the year all the way through to the year’s final night. It has been an honour and a pleasure throughout this time, to work with our staff team, our ever-supportive Board and the members they represent, on our socially just mission – to support NSW young people as best we can.

I look forward to seeing what effective change we can make together in the years to come!

**Reynato Reodica**

*Executive Officer*
Our Staff in 2008

State Office

Executive Officer (f/t)
Reynato Reodica

Policy & Training Officer (f/t)
John Ferguson (until May)
Thom Scire (from June)

Youth Participation Grants Program Officer (p/t)
Lam Huynh

Communications Officer (p/t)
Nick Manning

Editor (unleash magazine) (p/t)
Jess Carter (from May)

Finance & Administration Manager (p/t)
Martair

Administration Officer (p/t)
Joanne Bennett

Western Sydney Office

Western Sydney Regional Youth Development Officer (f/t)
Kylie Gordon-Wilkins (until June)

Administration Officer (p/t)
Joanne Bennett

(April) all YAPA staff: Thom, Joanne, Nick, Martair, Rey, Lam
Every Year YAPA conducts a major survey on an issue facing young people in NSW. In late 2007 YAPA developed a survey to uncover poverty and disadvantage among young people.

Previous research on poverty in Australia, which focussed on income levels, often failed to show the depth of disadvantage experienced by those in poverty.

The study found that the multiple disadvantage experienced by some young people has not been solved despite the economic growth of the last decade. YAPA found that about 1 in 10 young people are experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage, such as a secure home, money for small emergencies, and access to dental treatment.
as economic and social exclusion, as well as disengagement.

Apart from the findings on multiple disadvantage, other specific areas of disadvantage were found:

- 1 in 10 could not access mental health services, nor were able to access dental treatment
- 1 in 3 could not keep up with basic payments for services such as water, gas or electricity
- 1 in 3 had missed an important event because of a lack of available transport
- 1 in 20 did not have somewhere safe nor stable to live; for young parents, this ratio was 1 in 4
- 1 in 10 were deprived of basic psychological needs, such as the support of their family and a sense of belonging.

The report is available on YAPA’s website.

**Driving You Crazy? Survey**

In 2008 the YAPA policy team selected the theme of young people and driving and with much consultation and testing formulated the survey *Driving you crazy?* The survey asked about the processes involved in obtaining a provisional (P plate) licence - in particular the highly controversial 120 hour log book. It also asked about recent changes affecting P1 and P2 drivers including passenger and vehicle restrictions. Given the statistics regarding the injury and fatalities of young people on NSW roads and YAPA’s extensive experience with the issue it was timely to survey the issue.

For the first time we arranged for the design and printing of the survey in full colour. Printed surveys were distributed at the Sydney Big Day Out and through youth services. We also set up a web form as an alternative for young people who did not have access to the printed survey. Approximately 450 surveys were completed and a report summarising the results will be published during 2009.

**In 2008 the YAPA policy team selected the theme of young people and driving... and formulated the survey Driving you crazy?**
**Juvenile Justice**

It has been a busy year in relation to juvenile justice and young people. The year has seen many changes in NSW including the introduction of Youth Conduct Orders, amendments made to the 1978 Bail Act, the closure of several Juvenile Justice (detention) centres and over-crowding in juvenile justice detention centres across the state.

YAPA has been active on all of these issues and more by engaging in continuous conversation with state and federal MPs and other key stakeholders and by consulting strongly with the young people and youth services most affected. Several articles were published on this subject throughout the year in YAPRap as well as mainstream media. In particular, YAPA’s concerns about the three pilots of Youth Conduct Orders was well represented on radio coverage and in regional television news reporting.

YAPA, in conjunction with the Youth Justice Coalition (YJC), is endeavouring to protect the rights of young people in New South Wales by active advocacy and lobbying as well as educating youth and youth services on changes to legislation and police powers, to keep the sector informed is essential in protecting the legal rights of young people. YAPA and YJC held separate meetings with both the Minister and the Director-General of Juvenile Justice to raise these issues, which are being followed up in 2009.

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**Wood Inquiry into Child Protection Services**

Following a year long process of research and consultation with government and key stakeholders in child protection, Justice James Wood handed down his report on the Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW (The Wood Inquiry) in November - a document highly anticipated by the youth sector.

The report outlined key facts and issues relating to the child protection and management systems of the Department of Community Services (DoCS). It presented substantial recommendations for change to the state government.

Topics of keen interest to YAPA in the report included:
- early intervention
- juvenile justice
- young people leaving care

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Kylie Gordon-Wilkins, Western Sydney Regional Youth Development Officer until June 2008
YAPA Annual Report 2008

• DoCS-funded NGOs
• Community Services Grants Program (CSGP)
• funding reform
• risk of harm reports to DoCS
• out of home care
• domestic and family violence & child protection
• Aboriginal over-representation in child protection
• Toomelah & Boggabilla case studies

Brief summaries of these topics were made available to the sector via YAPRap.

MULTICULTURAL YOUTH ISSUES NETWORK NSW (MYINN)

The Multicultural Youth Issues Network NSW (MYINN) meets bi-monthly and consists of service providers who are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for refugee and migrant young people in NSW. MYINN was first established in 1996 and aims to coordinate statewide action, information and lobbying on issues affecting migrant and refugee young people.

MYINN also ran Diversity Training for workers who may be working with young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds. YAPA actively supports MYINN and its activities.

YAPA OUT LOUD

YAPA in the Media
YAPA conducted a number of media interviews during the year:
• ABC Central West – Youth participation opportunities in NSW
• ABC Local Radio – Coffs Harbour Rural Youth Issues Forum
• ABC Radio – Youth Conduct Orders pilot announcement
• ABC Statewide Drive – Youth Conduct Orders pilot announcement
• Australian Associated Press – Tweed City Shopping Centre ban on hats and hoodies
• Prime Local News (Armidale) – Youth Conduct Orders pilot announcement
• Sydney Morning Herald – Federal Binge Drinking campaign
• Sydney Morning Herald Online – Findings of Australian Democrats National Youth Survey

Presentations Made by YAPA
• NSW Student Representative Council
• NSW Volunteering Forum – panel presentation
• NSW Youth Advisory Council
• Politics in the Pub: Young People – Beyond the Media Hype – The Real Issues
• Tranby Aboriginal College
• Western Sydney Community Forum – CSGP Video presentation
YAPA SUBMISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT INQUIRIES

- NSW Parliament – The prohibition on the publication of names of children involved in criminal proceedings (Inquiry)
- NSW Government – Submission to the Rural and Regional Taskforce
- DoCS – Feedback on Draft CSGP Business Case
- CSGP peaks joint submissions to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW (Justice Wood)
- Australian Government – Submission to the Australia 2020 Youth Summit
- Australian Government – Australian Youth Forum consultation
- Australian Fair Pay Commission – Minimum Wage Review

YAPA PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEES & FORUMS

- NSW Minister for Community Services – Child Protection Advisory Group
- NSW Government – Cyberbullying Online Forum launch
- NSW Commission for Children and Young People – Children @ Work Taskforce
- DoCS Stakeholders forum on release of report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW
- DoCS Community Service Grants Program (CSGP) Roundtable
- DoCS Communities Division Partners Reference Group

YAPA PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

- Delegation of CSGP Peaks meeting with Minister for Community Services
- DoCS NGO Training Program stakeholders meeting
- Meeting with Department of Juvenile Justice Director General
- Meetings with Graham West, NSW Minister for Juvenile Justice & Youth
Advocacy, Lobbying & Networking (continued)

- NSW Opposition – Summit on Youth Homelessness and Mental Health
- NSW Parliament – Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Outside the Sydney CBD
- Regular meetings with the Linda Burney, NSW Minister for Youth
- Youth Consultation – Maitland Community Cabinet
- Australian Government – Australian Youth Forum consultation

YAPA Participation in Non-Government Consultations

- NSW Family Services forum with Linda Burney, NSW Minister for Community Services
- Human Rights Roundtable with UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues
- Macarthur Youth Sector Model Development Project

YAPA Participation in Key Non-Government Committees & Forums

- NSW Forum of Non Government Agencies
- NSW Youth Justice Coalition
- Regional Youth Development Offices Network (RYDON) Conference
- Street Workers Network
- Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) Conference
- Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) Annual General Meeting
- Local Government Community Services Association – Youth Workers’ Division (later Local Government and Youth Development Network)
- NSW Office of Industrial Relations – Video Competition awards presentation
- Australian Council of Social Service – Future of the Community Sector Conference
- Australian Youth Affairs Coalition – National Representative Council & Executive Committee and AGM
- State & Territory Youth Peaks Forum
The 2008 Young People’s Conference - Participation into action! drew in participants from across New South Wales who were keen to arm themselves with the skills necessary to bring about social change. Participants came from rural areas as far away as Tenterfield and Moree, as well as inner city areas such as Marrickville and Leichhardt, and everywhere in between.

Participants came together for the two and a half day conference at the Y Hotel Hyde Park, and after getting to know each other, learning valuable skills and sharing their enthusiasm and passion, most did not want to leave!

This year’s conference theme was Participation into Action! And what better way to encourage participation than to engage young people in designing and facilitating most of the workshops!

Participants were aged between 12 and 17 and some presented on topics incorporating ‘participation’ such as:
- advocacy and lobbying
- events and festivals
- youth advisory committees
- volunteering
• participation in the digital age
• fundraising
• using print media
• designing and tabulating surveys
• group work skills.

Other young people presented successful projects and programs designed and developed by young people. The aim of this component of the conference was to acknowledge and promote great youth programs, as well as encourage and inspire others. Showcase groups included:

- Moree Plains Shire Council on their Youth Council
- Eurobodalla Shire Youth Advisory Committee
- Claymore Youth Services
- Gravitate
- Liverpool City Council Youth Advisory Committee on the 2007 Yo.WeST Conference
- Bankstown City Council Youth Advisory Committee on the 2006 Peace Train.

The conference also boasted some high profile guests including the Minister for Youth, Juvenile Justice and Volunteering the Hon. Graham West and Amanda Scott, Chair of the NSW Youth Advisory Council.

**Rural Youth Issues Forum**

Our annual Rural Youth Issues Forum was held in Coffs Harbour, with workers from across rural NSW. The forum was an opportunity to showcase successful youth and youth service initiatives operating in rural NSW.

With a strong representation from regional workers from the Tweed to Gosford, issues were explored, discussions were had and the road to resolution mapped out.

YAPA staff discussed the Poverty and Disadvantage Among Young Australians Report and what it means for rural young people.

Mental health was also a hot topic with a presentation by staff from
the fantastic headspace North Coast focussing on mental health for young people outside capital cities.

As expected transport, housing, homelessness, young drivers, alcohol and other drugs were also high priority issues on the agenda.

The forum also boasted several presentations by local and visiting workers:

- Bree Dennis from Greater Taree Council and Graeme Kellner from Taree Aboriginal Youth Support presenting on the Street Beat Aboriginal Community Patrol Project and other services provided to young people in Taree.
- Jill Powell from Inverell Library discussing a highly successful program engaging young people in library services
- Vicki Fernance from Nambucca Shire Council discussing the Resilient Young People’s Program (RYPP)
- Kylie Honor from Homebase Youth Support.

Yet again this forum produced invaluable material to YAPA to use to advocate and represent the services in attendance. We would like to thank everyone who attended and a special thanks to our presenters, the north coast is lucky to have so many energetic workers!

**Survival training for youth workers**

An ongoing highlight for YAPA in 2008, our Survival Training for Youth Workers was held in Parramatta, Coffs Harbour and twice in Sydney. Usually full, and filling up more quickly each year, survival training continues to attract workers from across NSW in a range of youth-related jobs. Symbolic of the youth sector overall, this diversity adds to the learning and networking that occurs over the two days.

Survival training successfully achieves a balance of sessions targeted at new youth workers. However, it is also beneficial to those longer term youth workers who would like to refresh their skills and knowledge. Workshops that are particularly popular include alcohol and other drugs, engaging young people, mental health, managing challenging behaviours and duty of care and ethics.

YAPA is very grateful to all of the presenters who come and share their knowledge, including Ian Heininger, Stan Small, Graeme Pringle and Nick Manning. We look forward to another great year of Survival training in 2009.
Conferences & Training (continued)

Sexual Assault Fact Sheets & Training

YAPA Western Sydney published two fact sheets on sexual assault. The first is for victims of sexual assault, and provides victims with the information they need to understand what has happened to them, as well as information about the process of reporting the assault. The second fact sheet is for anybody who may be supporting a young person who has been sexually assaulted. YAPA Western Sydney also ran a one-day training course for youth workers, to equip them with the information and skills to support clients who have been sexually assaulted.

During 2008 the project published self-paced learning packages for council rangers and for pool attendants. These packages aim to assist non-youth workers to better relate to and deal with young people.

Hanging Out Together (HOT) Project

YAPA’s Hanging Out Together Project (HOT), which concluded in 2008, was funded by the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme of the NSW Department of Community Services. It aimed to research, consult and develop workable processes that facilitate and encourage the adoption of practices inclusive of young people by the operators of public spaces in western Sydney.
Communications

YAPRap

YAPRap is our regular newsletter of youth policy and youth work, with over 750 copies distributed to our members and subscribers in both hard copy and in PDF via email and website downloads. YAPRap articles are written by outside contributors and by YAPA staff, including our pool of casual feature writers, who in 2008 were: Isabel Seidel, Maria Kissouri, and Melanie Conlon. YAPA appreciates how much these writers enhance the quality and relevance of YAPRap for its readers in the youth sector.

UNLEASH

In 2008 we committed to publishing a magazine for young people, to complement YAPRap (which is for youth

Jess Carter, unleash Editor
workers). YAPA created a new casual position half a day per week, for a young person with media experience, to work with other staff and young people to turn the concept into reality. The result, unleash magazine, launched in May 2009.

**Girls@Work**

YAPA, with funding from the NSW Office for Women, published a resource to inform young people, particularly young women, about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. Written by an experienced curriculum writer in Cassy Norris, and enhanced by staff from the NSW Office of Industrial Relations, WorkCover and the NSW Commission for Children and Young People, the final resource is of very high quality. In 2008 YAPA sent a copy to each high school in NSW, and the remaining copies were eagerly snapped up by teachers and youth workers.

**Youth Work Ethical Dilemmas**

In 2008 YAPA continued its promotion of ethical practice in youthwork with our interactive ethical dilemmas. These youthwork scenarios are published in YAPRap, in YAPA Latest emails and on our ethics blog, and youth workers submit their responses to the blog.

This has proved to be a highly effective way of discussing and promoting ethics among youth workers in NSW.

**Website and Publications**

YAPA’s website is an integral part of the organisation. As well as advertising our events, most of our publications are only available online, at www.yapa.org.au.

The website lists current information, such as news and what’s on listings for young people and youth workers.

Many YAPRap articles are now also published online. The website has a growing collection of these articles, especially:

- stories of youth activism – showcasing what young people are
doing in their communities
• stories of youthwork - showcasing youth services and programs around NSW

In 2008 we published new facts sheets and guides, including:
• Young carers: awareness article
• Youth council/committee evaluation template 2/08
• Youth survey template
• Committees jargon buster 2/08
and others described elsewhere in this Annual Report.

**Email News & Networking**

YAPA Latest is a regular email newsletter to 1000 youth workers and networks. YAPA Latest allows YAPA to get information to the sector very quickly and easily.

**Egroups:** In 2008 YAPA continued to run egroups for:
• flya: Forum of local youth action — for active and interested young people across NSW
• FRYS: Forum of Rural Youth Services;
• MYINN: Multicultural Youth Issues Network NSW (previously NYIN)
• fydo: Forum of Youth Development Officers and interagencies.

**Database:** YAPA revamped our database during 2008. The YAPA database records over 4500 individuals and organisations, categorised in various ways to allow us to target our communications.
Youth Participation Grants Program

The Youth Participation Grants Program (YPGP) aims to encourage young people between 12 and 25 years to more actively participate in their community through the creation and implementation of community based youth led projects.

Having commenced in September 2006, this 12 month pilot project has attempted to achieve its aims by providing young people with funding to create and implement local projects. Four regions within the state were initially targeted to pilot project, namely South Western Sydney, New England, Mid North Coast and Far North Coast NSW.

The success of YPGP during this initial pilot phase provided YAPA with an extremely strong case to expand the project to all regions across the state in 2008.

Evaluation of the YPGP

At the end of the 12 month pilot period, YAPA commissioned an independent evaluation of the Youth Participation Grants Program.

Consultancy firm RPR Consulting successfully tendered to conduct the evaluation. The final evaluation report and the recommendations stemming from it provided YAPA with a framework for the expansion of YPGP.

The evaluation report found that the Youth Participation Grants Program created a range of positive outcomes for young people and their communities.

Young people reported gaining skills and pride in having addressed issues which impact on their community. Further, young grant recipients reported a strong sense of empowerment gained by having undertaken their projects and being given a voice and the resources to be heard.
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Grant recipients identified a number of outcomes for themselves and the community. These included:

- the development and refinement of skills
- learning how to work within, and with, formal organisational structures
- a sense of empowerment and accomplishment
- increased knowledge and awareness of issues that impact on young people
- increased community awareness of young people and their contributions to the community
- entertainment and something to do
- being heard.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations made as a result of the independent evaluation of the Youth Participation Grants Project were:

1. That DoCS fund the Youth Participation Grants Program to enable expansion to all regions across the state.

2. That YAPA develops an appropriate method for gaining basic outcome data from Youth Participation Grants Program recipients.

3. That YAPA develops a cost-effective, but useful and accessible training resource for grant recipients to help them undertake their projects.

4. That YAPA revises promotional material about the tiered funding structure to make it clearer and simpler for applicants to understand.

5. That YAPA redefines the Youth Participation Grants Program guidelines and selection criteria to include projects that may be funded under other youth grants programs as long as the idea comes from, and the project is implemented by, young people.

All of these recommendations were adopted and used to help develop a framework for the expansion of the program across the state.
Projects funded in 2008

In 2008 YAPA funded a total of 33 projects through YPGP. A wide range of projects were funded including festivals, training sessions, community awareness campaigns, conferences, camps, performances and short films.

The projects focused on a variety of issues which young people identified as being important in their local community, including:

- cyber bullying
- healthy eating
- healthy relationships
- racism
- raising the profile of young people
- entertainment.

Special thanks for their time and support: Edward Greenaway, Casey Lovelock, Tony Wiseheart, Reynato Reodica, Ebony Allen, Sean Torstensson, Sami Dawson, Matt Smith, Helen Machalias, Martin Drennan, and Armina Soemino.