

YOUTH ACTION ANNUAL REPORT 2014/2015

About Youth Action

Youth Action (formerly YAPA) is the peak organisation representing young people and youth services in NSW. Our work helps build the capacity of young people, youth workers and youth services, and we advocate to see positive change on issues affecting these groups.

Youth Action envisions a society where all young people are valued, engaged and supported.

To achieve these objectives, it is the role of Youth Action to:

1. Respond to social and political agendas relating to young people and the youth service sector
.....
2. Provide proactive leadership and advocacy to shape the agenda on issues affecting young people and youth services
.....
3. Collaborate on issues that affect young people and youth workers
.....
4. Promote a positive profile in the media and the community of young people and youth services
.....
5. Build capacity for young people to speak out and take action on issues that affect them
.....
6. Enhance the capacity of the youth services sector to provide high quality services
.....
7. Ensure Youth Action's organisational development, efficiency, effectiveness and good governance.



Youth Action NSW
Suite 403, 64-76 Kippax St,
Surry Hills NSW, 2010 Australia
p (02) 8218 9800 | **f** (02) 8569 2071
e info@youthaction.org.au
ABN 17 209 492 539

Designed by Camille Manley
camillemanley.com.au

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Board of Director's Chair Report



On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to present the 2014/2015 Youth Action Annual Report.

This year, Youth Action's work has been clearly shaped by engagement with young people and youth services, which you will see highlighted throughout this report.

Three significant election agenda campaign wins, a strong media presence, and successful advocacy for inclusion of youth services in the Targeted Earlier Intervention reform processes are merely a handful of examples of the positive work Youth Action has been able to achieve during this time.

We welcome and thank Katie Acheson, our Managing Director, for her outstanding leadership, which is setting the tone for an innovative future for Youth Action. I applaud the wonderful team, both past and present, for their dedication, passion and energy for the incredible work they do.

I thank our funders – the Department of Family and Community Services, and our dedicated members for their continued support.

We are proud that Youth Action continues to stand out as a champion for young people and youth services in NSW. The Board is looking forward to seeing what will be achieved in the year ahead!

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a long horizontal line that loops back to the left.

Jon Brew
Youth Action Chairperson

Managing Director's Report



I have thoroughly enjoyed my first year as Managing Director at Youth Action. During this time, the team has welcomed some fresh faces, celebrated the amazing work of those who went before us, and supported the phenomenal work of 32 young people through our internship program.

We kicked off the year by launching our NSW Election Agenda — shaping our advocacy efforts around nine key areas affecting young people throughout NSW. We had three significant wins in the areas of youth mental health, domestic and family violence and supportive schools, and I will make sure we push for change in the remaining six areas of policy.

Our incredible membership base of youth services and young people engaged with us throughout the year during the Election Agenda Campaign, Youth Sector Development initiatives, our annual Youth Work Awards, *Shift This* Youth Conference, and annual members surveys, just to name a few. I was happy to see a 367% increase in young people who responded to our annual membership survey, as we have been working hard to develop more avenues for young people to shape the focus of Youth Action's work.

Our media coverage soared, with a huge 124 mentions of Youth Action. This coverage was not only reflective of our policy work, but of the innovation coming out of the youth sector and young people. Over the coming year we will continue to push the positive contribution of the sector through our media profile.

I want to thank the youth sector, the amazing young people we work with, my team who are always pushing for positive outcomes for young people, and our exceptional Board of Governance.

I am excited for a year ahead of innovation and strong advocacy for young people and the incredible youth services who support them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katie Acheson'.

Katie Acheson
Managing Director, Youth Action

Staff & Board

CURRENT



Katie Acheson
Managing Director
(from September 2014)



Dean Williamson
Sector Support
Manager
(from December 2014)



Jake Formosa
Project Development
Manager



Natasha Lay
Western Sydney
Project Coordinator
(from October 2014)



Ruvi Perumal
Communications
Manager
(from February 2015)

PAST



Ahmad Al Rady
What's Up West?
Conference
Coordinator
(March – June 2015)



Alex Long
Western Sydney
Project Coordinator
(to September 2014)



Bridie Moran
Publications Manager
(to September 2014)



Eamon Waterford
Acting Managing
Director
(July – September 2014)
Director Policy
& Advocacy
(to May 2015)



Ellaina Welsman
Project & Office
Coordinator
(to June 2015)

YOUTH ACTION BOARD

Jon Brew
Lizette Twisleton
Lakin Agnew
Christopher Brereton
Andrew Clark
Stephanie Thompson (Shea)
Grace Palos (Stubee)
(to March 2015)
Pat Garcia (to March 2015)

Co-opted members

John Kirby
Frances Dreyer
Damian Cooper (from May
2015)

INTERNS

This year we worked with 32 young people through our internship and student placement programs. Our interns worked alongside Youth Action staff and gained valuable policy and advocacy work experience.

Membership

Youth Action’s membership represents the collective voice of the NSW youth sector and young people. Our members range from small independent services and local councils, to local and national NGOs. In 2014/2015:

- We welcomed 14 new member organisations.
- Due to sector reforms and funding constraints 5 previous member organisations closed down.



WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY



88% of young people* were happy with Youth Action’s advocacy efforts.



95% of members* agree that our sector updates have been helpful.



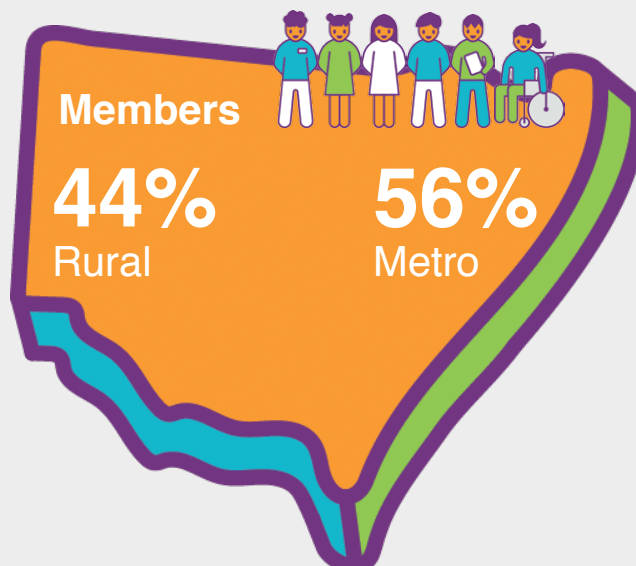
72% of youth services* say that ‘Youth Action helps us do our jobs better’.



66% of youth services* say they have been advocated for effectively.

* Based on 103 organisational and individual annual member survey responses. The highest proportion of survey responses came from the Sydney Metro region. 84% of members who responded were organisations.

+ Based on 112 responses to our annual young people survey. The majority of responses came from the Sydney and Western Sydney regions.



In 2015/2016 Youth Action will be reviewing our membership benefits to ensure we better serve the changing sector needs and requirements.

Youth Sector Support and Development

This year, our sector support work was informed by the announcement of reforms to the two major funding streams for NSW youth services – the Early Intervention and Placement Prevention and Community Builders programs.

TARGETED EARLIER INTERVENTION (TEI) REFORMS

Youth Action focussed our resources in planning, researching and lobbying with Ministers and bureaucrats to ensure that the sector was involved in the reform process.

We established a group of experienced youth workers, the Practice Expert's Group, who provide Youth Action and the sector with rapid responses to changes proposed under reforms.

At the time of writing, the TEI reforms process is underway and we are continuing our advocacy for the sector.

RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY PILOTS

Youth Action and NSW Family Services (FamS) coordinated two results-based accountability pilot programs to assist the sector in better articulating their successes and achievements.

Ten child, youth and family services in the Nepean/Blue Mountains District and the Adolescent and Family Counsellors Association developed two service-led outcomes frameworks from these pilots.

DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES PROGRAM

We established district representatives to provide Youth Action with a localised voice, and to support both local sector leadership and information flow across NSW.

The District Representatives program kicked off in June 2015 with representatives from 10 metro, rural and regional districts meeting in Sydney.

WESTERN SYDNEY

In 2015, the Western Sydney Youth Sector Alliance known as 'SHOUT' was officially re-established as the Western Sydney Youth Sector Network (WSYSN).

The Western Sydney Project delivered and supported the following Sector Support & Development initiatives:

- Macarthur Youth Services Network Planning Day
- Mt Druitt Blacktown Youth Services Network Advocacy and Lobbying Panel
- South West Sydney Engaging Schools & Community Forum

SURVIVAL TRAINING

Survival Training provides youth workers with the tools and knowledge they need to thrive in their work with young people. Our two-day course covers a range of topics including: engaging with young people, youth mental health, drug and alcohol issues, managing challenging behaviours and duty of care and ethics. In 2014/2015 Survival training was held in Wollongong, Sydney, Orange, Ingleside and Parramatta.



69

youth workers equipped through survival training

100%

of attendees reported an increase in knowledge/skills

98%

of attendees were satisfied with Survival Training



38%

of attendees were rural and regional youth workers

YOUTH WORK AWARDS



The second annual NSW Youth Work Awards recognised the exceptional work of youth services and youth workers in NSW.

The awards were celebrated at a gala ceremony on September 12, 2014. We received 43 nominations in 9 categories with each nomination sharing an exceptional story of positive contribution to the health, safety, and wellbeing of young people in NSW.

EXCELLENCE THROUGH OUTCOMES BASED DATA

Allison Blight

OUTSTANDING PROJECT OR SERVICE WORKING WITH CALD YOUNG PEOPLE

Magdi Breir (Individual)

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network NSW
(Project)

OUTSTANDING PROJECT OR SERVICE WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL YOUNG PEOPLE

Young NAIDOC (Project)

Luke Chesworth (Individual) from 'After Dark',
Glebe Youth Service
Darren Woodhouse

BEST PARTNERSHIP

ING Direct & Cerebral Palsy Alliance

Waratah Technology Campus & Plan-it-Youth
Mentoring Program

YOUTH WORK VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Laura Watts

YOUTH LED PROJECT OF THE YEAR (Awarded by The Frank Team)

The Central Coast Youth Leadership Project

Cessnock Youth Entertainment Committee
Interns Australia
Mosman Council Youth Services
Newcastle Undead Society

YOUTH WORKER OF THE YEAR

Jarrold Wheatley

Anna Beniuk
Anuska Mensch
Ashley Gobeil
Astrid Gearin
Athena Field
Bronwyn Dyason
Denis Laris
Lee Robinson
Linda Thomas
Mary-Kate Ferguson
Mere Johnson
Roxanne Rigg
Roz Ewart
Sarah Hogarth
Tom Stranger

YOUTH SERVICE OF THE YEAR

Mobile Youth Service

Youth Solutions (Macarthur and Wingecarribee)
Hearspace Newcastle
Mosman Council Youth Services
Mountains Youth Services Team
Reach Foundation
Samaritans
Southern Youth and Family Services
Young Life Australia

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Athena Field

Andrew Cummings
Kim McLoughry
Lakin Agnew

(Nominees with Winner in bold, Highly commended in italics)

Engaging Young People

This year, Youth Action began pivotal changes in how we engage with young people. As we re-evaluated our youth publication *Unleash*, we also pushed forward with new ways of reaching young people both online and offline.

SHIFT THIS 2014 YOUTH CONFERENCE

Shift This is Youth Action's biennial youth conference that enables young people to develop skills to make positive changes in their communities.



By the conclusion of the conference 11 projects were developed, addressing issues such as ethical consumerism, youth unemployment, housing affordability and sexual health. We received positive feedback on the conference, with participants commenting:

“ It was a really educating experience, and just overall 10/10 ”

OUTBURST! WESTERN SYDNEY YOUTH ACTION GROUP

Outburst! members are young people aged 12 – 25 who live, work or study in the Western Sydney local government areas of Auburn, Bankstown, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Holroyd, Hawkesbury, The Hills, Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith.

In 2014/15, 17 young people actively shaped *Outburst!* activities, such as *Friend2Friend*, and training in the areas of mental health first aid, leadership, communication, and workshop facilitation.

FRIEND2FRIEND

Friend2Friend is a youth-led mental health initiative designed by young people to equip young people with the skills and resources to tackle mental health issues in their local communities. The *Friend2Friend* model was co-developed by *Outburst!* members and psychologist Phil Nunn.

Friend2Friend supports young people to run workshops on how to be a good 'mental health buddy' including; how to provide sustainable support to a friend who is experiencing mental health concerns and how to raise awareness of youth mental health issues.

Friend2Friend has been made possible with a grant received from Daily Telegraph Champions of the West Health Grant.



YOUTH CONSULTATION NETWORK (YCN)

The Youth Consultation Network consists of 23 youth representatives, from across NSW. The network is a platform for youth council members to connect and share their experiences, as well as providing an opportunity for young people to get involved in Youth Action's policy and advocacy agenda.

This year YCN members undertook consultations on behalf of Youth Action and received a series of event management training sessions in the lead up to National Youth Week. .



280 young people consulted by YCN on Housing Affordability.

UNLEASH

Unleash is Youth Action's bi-monthly magazine of youth opinion and action.

Unleash was published twice in 2014/2015, and will be undergoing an overhaul in 2015/2016 to reach a wider audience and encourage greater youth participation.

1311
Unleash
Subscribers



12
writers and artists featured in *Unleash*

DIY REALITY YOUTH GRANTS PROGRAM

Our DIY Reality Youth Grants assist young people in Western Sydney by funding and supporting youth-led initiatives that benefit local young people and their communities.

Young people are also involved in selecting the successful projects and local mentors are identified to support participants through project implementation.

\$18,150
was awarded in small grants

9 projects were funded



40 young people were directly involved in delivering events

458 young people were engaged in the projects



Policy & Advocacy

This year, our 2015 Election Agenda focussed our advocacy on nine critical policy areas affecting young people in NSW in the lead-up to the March state election.

NSW ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Youth Action launched our Election Agenda in Youth Week 2014, focusing on 9 issues related to the value of Early Intervention and Prevention. Below are our 9 issues with key wins outlined.

Recommendations

Prevention & Early Intervention Services:

Commit to increase the Child, Youth and Family Support program budget by \$52 million.

Justice Reinvestment:

Fund a pilot of Justice Reinvestment in Bourke.

School Suspension:

Commit to an independent review of School Suspension and Discipline Policy and Practice within the first 100 days of forming government

Alcohol and Other Drugs:

Develop comprehensive alcohol education programs for young people aged 15–17.

Domestic & Family Violence:

Respond to the findings of the Youth Action & White Ribbon Australia's research on youth attitudes to violence.

Mental Health:

Fund training for rural youth workers to enable them to identify and work with young people on Mental Health issues, and to assist them to better understanding referral pathways.

Supportive Schools:

Increase youth workers in schools through the Student Support Officer programs and through better linkages between schools and youth services.

Housing:

Commit to improving housing affordability for young people.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships:

Funding for the expansion of the Sydney Alliance Working Start program – which links disadvantaged young people into local apprenticeships.

Commitments from the Baird Government

Domestic & Family Violence:

WIN

The Government announced a significant plan to eliminate domestic and family violence and created a new Ministerial Portfolio devoted to this issue.

In June 2015, the Government announced the inclusion of Domestic & Family Violence into the mandatory NSW 7–10 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) syllabus. Youth Action continues to advocate for the interests of young people in the process.

Mental Health:

WIN

The Government allocated \$250,000 for youth mental health first aid training in NSW which was conducted by Wesley Mission throughout the state.

Supportive Schools:

WIN

Within its \$150 million 'Supported students, successful students' funding package, the Coalition has devoted \$51.5 million of flexible funding to respond to issues such as cyber safety or bullying. This funding is equivalent to an additional 200 Student Support Officers.

Housing:

The Government has pledged to set up a \$1 billion fund for social and affordable housing and \$20 million for a Social Housing Community Improvement Fund.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships:

Although the Sydney Alliance Working Start program was not continued, the Government committed \$86 million to its Reskilling NSW plan which seeks to give scholarships to 200,000 disadvantaged youth to undertake industry apprenticeships and traineeships.

Justice Reinvestment:

The Government has committed to funding a plan to develop a pilot Justice Reinvestment program in Bourke run by Just Reinvest NSW.

84

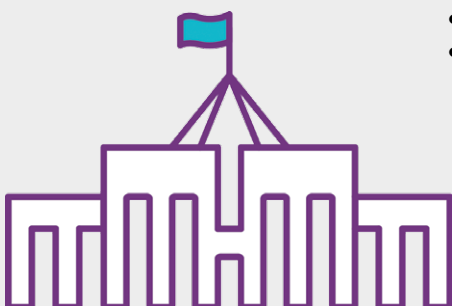
Youth services that engaged with their Local MP to seek a commitment to Early Intervention and Prevention services.

POLICY PAPERS AND SUBMISSIONS

- 2 research papers published with the White Ribbon Australia on Young People's Attitudes to Domestic, Family & Teen Dating Violence
- Homeshare: An affordable housing alternative
- Social Housing in NSW
- Inquiry into volunteering and unpaid work placements among children and young people in NSW

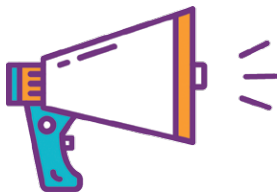
REPRESENTATION AND ADVOCACY

- Amnesty International NSW Youth Conference 2015
- Australian College of Community and Disability Practitioners Board
- Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) Board
- Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) Conference
- Bays Precinct International Summit
- City of Sydney's City Talk panel on the Housing Crisis
- Council of Social Service of New South Wales (NCOSS)
- Duty of Care & Ethics Training to Praxis Youth Work Students
- Eastern Suburbs Youth Services Network Forum
- FaCS District Directors Meeting
- Hunter Election Forums
- Inner West Youth Alliance Planning Day
- Local Government Youth Development (LGYDN)
- Meetings with Hon. Brad Hazzard MP, Hon. Linda Burney MP, Hon. Pru Goward MP, Andrew Johnson (NSW Advocate for Children and Young People), Michael Coutts-Trotter (FaCS Secretary) and Maree Walk (FaCS Deputy Secretary)
- Mountains Youth Services Team (MYST)
- Multicultural Youth Affairs Network (MYAN) NSW
- National Framework on Protecting Children
- Nepean Blue Mountains Youth Consultation
- Regional Youth Development Officers Network (RYDON)
- Safe Home for Life Consultation
- SelfCare training to Youth Off The Streets Wollongong
- Shellharbour Interagency
- St George Youth Network
- Sydney Alliance Board
- Sydney University Panel 'Why are we afraid of young people?'
- The Collective Nepean Blue Mountains
- The Collective Western Sydney
- Think Outcomes! Conference
- Western Sydney Youth Sector planning day
- Youth Housing Summit
- Youth Off the Streets Policy Briefing
- ZEST Awards presenting alongside NSW Premier Mike Baird



Media and Communications

MEDIA



124
media mentions
▲112% Increase
on previous year

Media highlights include:

- 20 mentions regarding our 'Homeshare: An Affordable Housing Alternative' policy paper released in May 2015;
- 44 mentions of findings from our comprehensive research papers in partnership with White Ribbon Australia on Young People's Attitudes to Domestic, Family & Teen Dating Violence;
- 20 mentions around our call for greater alcohol education in schools; and
- Coverage spanning national and local outlets including ABC Radio, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Guardian Australia, Channel 9 Weekend Today, and more.

PUBLICATIONS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

This year we began evaluating our longstanding publications, *Unleash* and *yaprap*. In the coming year we look forward to growing the readership of these publications, and engaging further with young people.

3,300
publications
subscribers
▲ 8% increase
on previous year



WEBSITE

Our website growth this year has been directly impacted by strong cross-promotion of content across social media and emails. Our 2015 Election Announcement page, detailing the announcements by the major parties regarding young people, was a highlight with an 8-minute average viewing time.

100,063
Page views
▲ 4% increase
on previous year

40,028
Visits
▲ 21% increase
on previous year



We will be launching a new Youth Action website next year to better serve young people and youth sector needs.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media channels have grown this year through targeted posts and a focus on content engagement.

f **1421** Likes
▲ 45% increase on previous year

Launched August 2014



t **2066** followers
▲ 38% Increase on previous year



