



**NSW Youth Advisory Council**

Annual Report 2005  
**2005**



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ISSN 1446-9316



## YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

### NEW SOUTH WALES

The Hon Reba Meagher MP  
Minister for Community Services  
Minister for Youth  
Level 37  
Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

31 December 2005

Dear Minister

It gives me great pleasure to present you with the 2005 New South Wales Youth Advisory Council Annual Report.

The Council is committed to consulting with young people and increasing young people's participation in the community and government. This commitment is reflected in the variety of Council activities in 2005.

In 2005 the Council provided advice to the Government in the development and implementation of various policies that affect the lives of young people in NSW.

The Council appreciates your support and commitment to working with young people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'MLE', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mathew Ferguson  
Chair

## **Role of the Council**

The New South Wales 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 which 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; and,
- to collect, analyse and provide the Minister with information on issues and policies concerning young persons.

## **Administration of the Council**

On 21 January 2005, the Hon Reba Meagher, MP, was appointed Minister for Community Services and Minister for Youth and assumed responsibility for administering the *Youth Advisory Council Act*.

The Communities Division in the Department of Community Services, provides secretariat services to the Council.

## **Membership of the Council**

In 2005 the New South Wales Youth Advisory Council consisted of 12 part-time members appointed by the Minister. It received ex-officio and secretariat support from the Communities Division in the Department of Community Services.

Under the *Youth Advisory Council Act 1989*, at least half the Council’s 12 members must be under the age of 25 years at the time of their appointment. This ensures that young people speak for themselves. Members must have experience, skills and qualifications that will enable them to make a positive contribution to the work of the Council.

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

from metropolitan, regional and rural areas; young men and women; young Aboriginal people; young people from non-English speaking backgrounds; and people with experience in a range of youth and community organisations.

### **Council members in 2005**

Ms Ebony Allen	Ultimo	Age: 20 years
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Ebony is a young Aboriginal woman, from Byron Bay. She is studying a Bachelor of Laws in Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney. Ebony has been involved in a range of voluntary activities in her local community and was the Byron Shire Australia Day Young Citizen of the Year in 2003. Ebony is a member of the Premier's Council for Women and is on the Aboriginal Youth Leadership Project Steering Committee.

Ms Leah Ashley	Hamilton	Age: 23 years
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Leah has a Bachelor of Development Studies (Honours) with research experience in the social justice outcomes of development processes. She is an accredited peer mediator and has worked with the International Youth Parliament.

Ms Ace Boncato	Mt Druitt	Age: 20 years
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Ace was a member of her school Student Representative Council for four years before completing her Higher School Certificate in 2003. She is currently studying a Bachelor of Business at the University of Technology, Sydney. Ace is a member of the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association Management Committee and the Osteogenesis Imperfecta Society. Through her singing, Ace is involved in a range of fundraising, charity events and other activities. Ace is a member of the Advisory Board to the Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health.

Mr Mathew Ferguson (Chair)	Northmead	Age: 21 years
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Mathew has been involved in various youth committees, including the Parramatta Youth Advisory Committee and the National Youth Week Planning Group. Mathew works full-time and is studying Commerce/Marketing at Macquarie University. He is currently a member of the NSW Youth Interagency Taskforce and the Commission for Children and Young People's Children at Work Taskforce.



Mr Reynato Reodica                      Doonside                      Age: 22 years  
Rey is a Chairperson of the Board of Management of the Youth Action and Policy Association (the peak non-government youth organisation in NSW) and the Young Spokesperson of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition. Rey is in his fourth year of a Communications/Law degree at the University of Technology, Sydney. Rey is also a member of the NSW Website Reference Group and represents the Council at NSW State Student Representative Council meetings.

Mr Xian-Zhi Soon                      Revesby Heights                      Age: 19 years  
Zhi is currently in his second year at the University of NSW, studying a combined Economics/Arts degree. He is a member of the NSW Board of Studies, NSW Health Futures Strategic Advisory Council and the Children and Young People's Health Priority Taskforce. Zhi is also a representative on the Motor Accidents Authority (MAA) Arrive alive Grants Committee.

Mr Brad Welsh                      Newtown                      Age: 24 years  
Brad works as a Community Program Officer with the NSW Department of Community Services in Redfern. He holds a Bachelor of Welfare (Aboriginal Community Studies) and is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Laws at the University of NSW. Brad is very active in his local area; he is a member of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and works very closely with a number of community programs in the Redfern Area. Brad is also a member of the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) Road Safety Taskforce and the NSW Website Reference Group.

**Ex-officio member**

Mr Tony Wiseheart, Manager, Youth Partnerships and Participation Team, Communities Division, Department of Community Services, was the ex-officio member of the Council.

Secretarial support was provided to the Council by Ms Vanessa Merewether.

**Work of the Council**

In 2005 the Council fulfilled its functions as specified under the Act through a range of activities.

Council prepared a Work Plan in 2005 for the Minister's consideration. Council identified two main themes: 'Health' and 'Unengaged Young People'.

Members also proposed to continue to monitor progress and provide advice on issues raised in 2004 on Safety, Road Safety and Young Workers' Issues.

The two main themes included a range of issues:

Health

Mental Health

Unengaged Young People

Participation

Identity

Young People with Disabilities

Young Parents and Families

Sport and Recreation

The Minister approved the Work Plan, expressing particular interest in the issues of disadvantaged and unengaged parents and requested advice on how to make mental health services more accessible to young people.

Council members have explored the issues outlined in the Work Plan by hosting forums, attending seminars and conferences, and conducting research. Members have represented the Council on a range of Government committees, and Ministers and others with a key role in these issues have met with the Council.

Health

**Mental Health**

Members were concerned about the accessibility of information and services available to young people who have self-esteem issues, are depressed, contemplating suicide, or facing other mental health issues.

In order to investigate whether/how 'Mental Health' issues are addressed in the school curriculum, particularly in Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) classes, Council approached the Office of the Board of Studies. Stan Browne, Inspector PDHPE, Office of the Board of Studies, provided a copy of the new syllabus which outlined the content to be taught in relation to mental health for Years 7-8 and Years 9-10.

Mr Browne indicated that one of the major differences between the previous PDHPE syllabus and the new syllabus is that the new syllabus targets the major health issues that research indicates impact on young people: mental health, drug use, road safety, nutrition, sexual health and physical activity. The intention of the new syllabus is to give teachers more time in the classroom to address these major health issues and to guarantee that all schools will teach this content to their students. The syllabus is less than halfway into its implementation phase; Board officers are conducting ongoing evaluation of the syllabus.

Internet research was also conducted on suicide prevention programs for young people.

Bernadette Dagg, Manager, Prevention Unit, Centre for Mental Health, NSW Department of Health, briefed the Council on the importance of early intervention. Council members agreed that support for young people supporting those with mental health issues is vital.

Jonathan Nicholas, Director of Programs, Inspire Foundation, spoke to the Council about “youth” as a category, as many young people don’t fall into the “child” or “adult” category when seeking mental health services.

The Council feels that the 2006 Council could have a significant role in any future Suicide Prevention forums. The 2006 Council could also have a role in updating the NSW Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Council remains concerned that young people supporting those with mental health issues are not aware of the resources/support available to them.

### **Unengaged Young People Participation**

Members sought to assist the Government in implementing its commitment to increase the number of young people appointed to Government advisory boards and committees (‘Working for Young People – Labor’s commitment to young people in NSW’, March 2003, p.2).

Council agreed on the following approaches:

- Work to increase the number of skilled and knowledgeable young people listed on the Government’s Register of Boards and Committees (managed by the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services Division of the Premier’s Department)
- Promote young people with relevant skills/knowledge to the appropriate boards and committees
- Promote the benefits of having a young person on boards/committees, regardless of their skills in a specific area

The Executive Officer wrote to all young people on the Register on 24 August 2005 advising them of the call for nominations for Youth Advisory Council membership in 2006.

The Premier’s Department also wrote to all young people on the Register to confirm that they want to remain on the register and to update their contact details.

Young people applying for membership of the Youth Advisory Council were asked to tick a box on the application form if they wanted to be listed on the Register of Boards and Committees. A total of 185 young people asked to have their details added to the Register. The Department of Community Services is now liaising with the Premier’s Department to update the Register.

## **Identity**

Members were concerned about how young people resolve issues relating to their identity in their transition from dependence to independence.

Council members attended the Spectrum Conference, hosted by the youth wing of the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW in Youth Week 2005, which included themes on cultural identity and racism in contemporary Australia. Council members also attended The Centre for Community Welfare Training workshop 'Between a rock and a hard place: helping young people developing a sense of cultural identity' on 24 June 2005.

The Council met with Margaret Kama, Commissioner, Community Relations Commission, to discuss the Council's views on celebrating cultural diversity and to identify issues of importance to young people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Margaret Kama and the Council then co-hosted a meeting with key groups interested in identity issues. Representatives from the Youth Action and Policy Association, the Commission for Children and Young People, NSW State Student Representative Council, Youth Partnership with Arabic Speaking Communities and the Youth Partnership with Pacific Communities attended.

Following the meeting, the Community Relations Commission (CRC) established a Multicultural Youth Network. The Network will build on the Government's election commitments and policies on citizenship, and will support young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to engage in the community and to become leaders in the community.

Following the establishment of the Network, Myriam Bahari, Project Coordinator, Canterbury/Bankstown Community Harmony Round Table Project, Community Relations Commission, met with the Council. She provided an update on the development of the Network and highlighted the commitment of the Community Relations Commission to young people.

## **Young People with Disabilities**

Members were concerned that young people with a disability do not always have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making on issues that affect them.

Angela Littleford, Senior Manager, Family and Children's Programs, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC), spoke to the Council about DADHC's work with young people with a disability.

Internet research was conducted into the various states' and territories' policies on young people with a disability. Results indicated that there was a lack of clearly defined information regarding policies on young people with a disability.

The Youth Advisory Council's Executive Officer liaised with Y Connection (a website for those who want to live a life outside the stereotype of having a disability) about projects that they are involved with. These include mentoring programs for young people with a disability. The Spastic Centre, in consultation with young people and in partnership with the creator of the youth mentoring program LEAPS (Lawyers Encouraging and Assisting Promising Students), has developed a mentoring program linking young people with a disability with mentors. The program will commence in 2006 with a year-long pilot in both Sydney and the Hunter region.

Council member Ace Boncato, who is a member of the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association, has consulted with other Association members on issues including access, the need for acceptance, equal opportunity and community vs. personal issues.

Council agreed to propose an online forum for young people with a disability be held in 2006. It is intended that the proposed forum be held in consultation with the Minister for Disability and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

### **Young Parents and Families**

Members were concerned about young parents and young families who are unengaged or disadvantaged.

Council agreed to investigate how the Families First Strategy supports young parents and was briefed by Paul Murphy, Director, Communities Policy, Communities Division, Department of Community Services.

Council believes there is merit in Families First staff in appropriate regions organising a "Young Parents Day" where all government and non-government services could be "on display" to young people. The Council has met with Families First staff to discuss how this proposal could be implemented.

Internet research was conducted to develop a list of websites that provide support to young parents and families.

Council members have also liaised with a representative from OzProspect, an organisation planning a Young Parents Roundtable in 2006, to see how this could benefit young parents in NSW.

## **Sport and Recreation**

Members were concerned about the opportunities available for young people to participate in sport and recreational activities.

Jeanette Webb, Policy and Corporate Strategy Co-ordinator, Office of the General Manager, and Cristy Cotter, Senior Project Officer, Programs and Partnerships Directorate, NSW Sport and Recreation, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, briefed the Council on opportunities available to young people.

Council also reviewed research from the Final Report from the 'NSW Youth Participation Survey 2004', and the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme report on 'Rural and Regional Young People and Transport'.

Council believes that increased participation in sport will not only engage many groups of young people who may not otherwise participate, but will also work towards decreasing the incidence of obesity in young people.

Council noted that affordability is an issue when young people consider sport and recreational activities. Programs such as the Youth Partnership with Arabic Speaking Communities have noted that high cost of registration and insurance in sports teams is a barrier to many young people participating in organised sport.

## **Road Safety**

Council provided advice on a number of unintended consequences of some of the "road safety" options for young drivers proposed in or by the media.

The Council held three Youth Forums on Safety in 2004, and a fourth Forum in Springwood on 21 March 2005. Young people were consulted on road safety issues at each of these Forums.

Council members met with The Hon. Carl Scully, MP, then Minister for Roads and Minister for Housing, on 8 December 2004 to discuss the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) Options Paper, 'Improving Safety for Young Drivers'.

Council provided written comments to Minister Scully on:

- Introducing a limit of no more than one passenger for P1 drivers aged under 26
- Introducing a restriction which prohibits Provisional licence holders under 26 from driving high-powered vehicles

The Council also made a submission to the RTA on the Options Paper 'Improving Safety for Young Drivers' on 28 February 2005.

Following Council's meeting with Minister Scully, the Minister appointed a member of the Council to the Road Safety Taskforce which was established to consider submissions on the RTA Options Paper.

Council members also represented the Council on the Arrive alive Grant Advisory Committee.

### **Young Workers' Issues**

Members continued to be concerned that young people are unaware of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace, particularly in relation to wages and Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) issues.

The Council held three Youth Forums on Safety in 2004 and a fourth Forum in Springwood on 21 March 2005. Young people were consulted on workplace safety issues at each of these Forums.

The Council took up the issues raised at the Forums with the Office of Industrial Relations (OIR) and WorkCover NSW. OIR and WorkCover NSW then provided briefings on their work with young people on employment-related issues.

During Youth Week 2005, the Office of Industrial Relations, WorkCover NSW and the NSW Youth Advisory Council held the 'Your Rights and Your Safety at Work' videoconference, to engage young people on workplace issues. The Chair of the Council chaired the videoconference, which was linked to ten regional locations around NSW.

The OIR used the videoconference to launch a survey - 'Young People and Work Survey 2005' - to gauge young people's understanding of their employee rights, responsibilities and safety in the workplace.

More than 5000 young people responded to the survey. The results of the survey showed that young people have a limited knowledge of their employment rights and a restricted capacity to defend their interests.

Young people who filled in the survey said they wanted to learn more about their rights as part of their school work. To assist teachers in this task the OIR produced *Money Stuff! Work Smart*, a teachers' resource for Commerce, Work Education and Business Studies. Copies of the *Money Stuff! Work Smart* resource book have been distributed to more than 900 high schools across NSW.

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) has also undertaken research examining the full range of work undertaken by children. The findings of this research were published in the 'Children at Work' report.

The Commission has established a Children at Work Taskforce to continue looking at young workers' issues. The Chair of the Youth Advisory Council, Mathew Ferguson, has been appointed to this taskforce.

### **Youth Forums**

In 2005 the Council hosted a Youth Forum on 'Young People – Feeling and Being Safe' in Springwood, as part of an on-going review of the five strategies listed in 'Working Together, Working for Young People', the Government's Youth Policy 2002-2006.

The Youth Forum included workshops on:

- Driver, Passenger and Pedestrian Safety
- Rail Safety
- Work Safety Issues for Young People
- Personal Safety Issues for Young People
- Barriers to Safer Local Communities for Young People

### **Subcommittees**

#### Youth Week

The NSW Youth Week Young People's Committee, a Council subcommittee, advises on Youth Week in NSW.

Iktimal Hage-Ali was the NSW representative on the National Planning Group for Youth Week in 2005.

The Minister held a reception on 11 April 2005 to launch Youth Week in NSW 2005 and announce the appointment of the 2005 NSW Youth Advisory Council. The winners of the Youth Week Alert Poster and the Youth Week Temporary Tattoo competitions were awarded their prizes. Teine Sa, a rock band from Wiley Park Girls High School, played at the launch. During Youth Week in NSW, more than 1200 events were organised with the support of 148 NSW Local Councils.

#### Youth.NSW Website

The [www.youth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.youth.nsw.gov.au) website aims to keep young people in NSW informed about what the Government is doing for young people and where to go for information about issues, services and activities. The website also aims to encourage youth participation and hear young people's ideas on a range of issues.

The Website Reference Group, a subcommittee of the Youth Advisory Council, made recommendations about the Youth.NSW and 2005 Youth Week in NSW websites. The group is also a resource to other government departments in developing appropriate online content for young people.

During 2005, the interactive capabilities of the Youth.NSW site have been used in a number of ways by the Youth Advisory Council to receive input

into issues affecting young people in NSW, including an online forum as an adjunct to the series of youth forums. A Have a Say email alert subscription service was established, allowing young people to be notified when opportunities arise to participate via the Youth.NSW website.

### **Meetings with Government Ministers**

In 2005 the Council met with The Hon. Reba Meagher, MP, Minister for Youth and The Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC.

### **Council meetings**

In 2005 the Council met on 20 February, 11 April, 22 May, 1 July, 26 August, 24 September, 30 October and 7 December.

Council met with:

Sarah Trapla	Policy Advisor, Office of the Hon. Reba Meagher, MP
Dr Alan Laughlin	Deputy Director General, Department of Education and Training
Anita Tang	Director, Health Strategies Division, The Cancer Council, NSW
Meagan Lawson	Parliamentary Liaison Officer, The Cancer Council, NSW
Tahn O'Brien	Assistant Project Director, Community, Drug Information Strategy, Premier's Department
Amanda Pullinger	Project Manager, Community Drug Information Strategy, Premier's Department
Clive Morgan	Senior Policy Officer, Better Futures, Communities Division, Department of Community Services
Caron Bowen	Senior Project Officer, Better Futures, Communities Division, Department of Community Services
Katie Davis-Hall-Watson	Communications Manager, Information & Communication Services, the Office of Industrial Relations
Margaret Kama	Commissioner, Community Relations Commission
Angela Littleford	Senior Manager, Family and Children's Programs, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Aldo Pennini	Director, Reforming Human Services, Redfern Waterloo Authority
Paul Murphy	Director, Policy, Communities Division, Department of Community Services
Jeanette Webb	Policy and Corporate Strategy Co-ordinator, Office of the General Manager, NSW Sport and Recreation, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation
Cristy Cotter	Senior Project Officer, Programs and Partnerships Directorate, NSW Sport and Recreation, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation
Somali Cerise	Co-ordinator, Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, AIDS Council of NSW
Mandy Loundar	Youth Liaison Officer, NSW Ombudsman
Bernadette Dagg	Manager, Prevention Unit, Centre for Mental Health, NSW Department of Health
Far Chiang	Coordinator, NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health
Ruth Callaghan	Acting Director, Families First, Communities Division, Department of Community Services
Myriam Bahari	Project Coordinator, Canterbury/Bankstown Community Harmony Round Table Project, Community Relations Commission
Jonathan Nicholas	Director of Programs, Inspire Foundation
Gillian Calvert	Commissioner, Commission for Children and Young People
Nicolas Parkhill	Acting Deputy Director, Centre for Drug and Alcohol, NSW Health
Lisa Braid	Centre for Drug and Alcohol, NSW Health
Sonja Stewart	Executive Director, Communities Division, Department of Community Services

## **Committees**

The Council represents the views of young people on a number of government and non-government committees.

Council was represented on the following committees in 2005:

- NSW Youth Interagency Taskforce (YIT)
- National Youth Week National Planning Group
- Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health Advisory Board (CAAH)
- Youth Justice Advisory Committee (YJAC)
- Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) Road Safety Taskforce
- Arrive alive Grant Advisory Committee
- NSW Health Futures Planning Strategic Advisory Committee
- Board of Studies
- Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) – Children at Work Taskforce
- Youth Alcohol Action Plan (YAAP) Advisory Committee
- Children and Young People’s Health Priority Taskforce

## **Conferences, seminars and forums**

Council members presented at the following conferences, seminars and forums:

- NSW State Student Representative Council (SRC) Conference
- Springwood Youth Forum, ‘Young People – Feeling and Being Safe’
- Hanging Out Together (HOT) Forum
- ‘Your Rights and Safety at Work’ videoconference
- Launch of the results of the ‘Young People and Work Survey 2005’ and the *Money Stuff! Work Smart* teachers’ resource
- Youth Identity Meeting
- Consultation with Local Government Youth Advisory Groups in Western Sydney

Council members attended the following conferences, seminars and forums:

- Motor Accidents Authority (MAA) Arrive alive Forum
- Streetwise StreeTalk
- Spectrum - A CALD Youth Conference
- Meeting of State and Territory Ministerial Youth Chairs - Adelaide
- NSW Health Futures Roundtable
- Consultation Forum, part of the National Alcohol Strategy 2005-2009
- 'Between a rock and a hard place: helping young people developing a sense of cultural identity' workshop
- Youth Health Forum - 'Young and Pregnant: supporting the journey'
- NSW Health Futures Forum
- National Student Leadership Forum
- Prime Minister's Summit with Islamic Leaders



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