

JULY 2022

YOUTH WORK NSW

Newsletter

Well, it has been a busy first half of the year. The Executive Committee's first meeting was a full day planning session at the beginning of February. Since then, the Committee has been meeting fortnightly with lots of things to do between meetings.

Here's a run-down on what has happened so far:

First action point was to convene the Executive Committee, and elect the Deputy Convenor, Secretary and Treasurer (the Convenor and General Secretary were elected at the AGM). We also thought it important to have an IT position to help set up the website and email systems, and to manage data. Office bearers for the Association now are:

Convenor: **Michelle Comito**

Deputy convenor: **Maddy Forwood**

General Secretary: **Howard Sercombe**

Secretary: **Elaine Yallop**

Treasurer: **Russell Ingram**

IT Officer: **Kaz Zinetti**

Ordinary members (who are of course quite extraordinary) are **Sarah Callahan** and **Sam Kettlewell**. The Constitution makes provision for two other positions: a representative from Youth Action, who will be Kate Munro, and an Indigenous representative. Indigenous members of the Association have met, and have elected **Adrian Sunderland** to the Indigenous Representative position.

Planning

The Executive Committee came together pretty much as soon as lockdown was lifted to get to know each other and to set out a programme of work for the next year. Briefly, that includes:

- Setting up webpage/IT systems/communication
- Continuing to promote and process membership
- Reviewing, rewriting and promoting the Code of Ethics
- Developing structures for inclusion of Indigenous and LGBTQI+ perspectives
- Promoting better youth work training at all levels but particularly at the (then) non-existent NSW university level

We are also working on building partnerships and connections with external organisations like Youth Action (not that YA is really external), DCJ, the universities, the Minister's office, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the AASW etc.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE SO FAR...

SETTING UP A WEBPAGE AND COMMUNICATIONS.

Everyone who has set up an organisation in the last couple of decades knows how crucial an on-line presence can be. Kaz, our multiskilled IT officer, has been meeting with Tyrone and Freya from Youth Action to set up a webpage and communication system that is worthy of professional youth work. Still a way to go, but good progress is being made. Thanks to Youth Action for hosting and sorting out domain names etc.

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

There is still a lot of work to do here. We have been are having discussions with Youth Action about the nature of the partnership between us, and have a draft Memorandum of Understanding to work through. We presented at the Central Coast Community Council earlier in June, and are available if other networks want to find out more about the Association. Feedback from sector organisations is really positive, and there has been wide enthusiasm that youth work is organising itself in this way.

The stronger our membership, the stronger our voice. Don't forget to talk to your colleagues about signing up to become a member! Visit www.youthworknsw.org.au for more info

Department for Communities and Justice

Evidence Review

We have met several times now with the team from DCJ who is putting together an Evidence Review on Youth Socioemotional Wellbeing. Initially, they were going to do a review of evidence-based interventions with young people that had been evaluated by Randomised Control Trials (RCTs). We were concerned that that would mean that all of their data would be American and psychology-based, because that is who does RCTs. That could have meant an imposition on the sector, saying this is what you have to do or this is what we will fund based on the evidence review. We have no problem with Mindfulness training or Yoga, but young people also need help with homelessness or income support.

The team was brilliant: they listened to what we said about what youth work is about, and radically shifted the terms of the inquiry to investigate the evidence that establishes the effectiveness of youth work as an intervention with young people.

The Review team has asked if the following text can be sent out to our members:

Building the Evidence Base for Good Youth Work: an opportunity to share materials about your work, for an evidence review about Youth Work, Agency and Empowerment

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) has commissioned a Review to pull together the evidence on how youth work can foster agency and empowerment. There has long been a need for sound evidence to support youth work practice, identified by Youth Work peak bodies including Youth Work NSW (the professional Association for youth workers in NSW) and Youth Action (the NSW peak body representing young people and the services who support them). The Research Centre for Children and Families at the University of Sydney is undertaking the Review and the findings will be embedded on the [DCJ Evidence Portal](#). The idea is that the Review will be a resource for youth workers in informing their work and making the argument for its effectiveness.

We are aware that there is a lot of information about youth work that never makes it into journals or other publications. So that we don't miss this information, we are asking if your agency has any reports, articles, evaluations or any other materials that speak to your work in this space, that describe your programs and practices and contribute to the following topics:

1. 'What is youth work?' Including definitions and history
2. Theories underpinning youth work
3. Types of youth work interventions, and evidence for their effectiveness
 1. Interventions and relationships
 2. Interventions and advocacy, participation, agency or empowerment
4. The youth work profession
 1. Formal youth work education/training
 2. Professional development, professional identity and 'professionalization'
 3. Supervision and management
 4. Experiences of youth workers in the field
 5. State of practice in Australia

Types of submissions could include:

- External evaluations of services and programs within youth work
- Internal evaluations of services and programs within youth work
- Write-ups or reports of service models
- Articles
- Network briefings
- Practice guidance or policy with themes of agency, empowerment, youth advocacy or participation
- Conference presentations

If your organisation is interested in contributing information and has questions, please contact:

Professor Amy Conley Wright, Project Lead
amy.conleywright@sydney.edu.au, 0490 433 796

Your contribution is needed by **Friday 20th July**. Email contributions to: rccf.research@sydney.edu.au

For more information about the Research Centre for Children and Families, visit: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/arts/our-research/centres-institutes-and-groups/research-centre-for-children-and-families.html>

Social sector transformation fund (SSTF)

We have been successful in gaining advice and consultation services from Social Impact who are assisting the association with develop a Yearly Strategic Plan.

Social Impact is also assisting the association in linking in with another organisation, Justice Connect, to possibly assist us with refining our Governance and develop processes such as policies and procedures and risk assessments. This opportunity will provide a huge advantage to the association in helping it be set up for expansion.

UTS Shopfront

The association has been successful in gaining a project spot in the UTS Shopfront program where dedicated 3rd year students will be working on a re-brand project for the association. This will open up a new look and marketing push for the association with a new website and collateral to come.

Code of Ethics Training and advocacy

Reviewing, rewriting and promoting the Code of Ethics:

The Code of Ethics that is in place in NSW (https://www.youthaction.org.au/2004_code_of_ethics) hasn't been reviewed since 2004. Not that there is anything really wrong with it, but we might say things a little differently in after 20 years! So it will need a revisit, even if we don't change anything.

Coincidentally, the Youth Coalition of the ACT is currently reviewing their Code of Ethics (which is pretty much the same as ours), and we have had conversations about whether we can do that jointly. It makes sense for there to be as much commonality as possible across the States and Territories, and especially for there to be no conflict in the provisions. The ACT's draft rewritten Code is soon out for comment, and we will have been responding to that. Feel free to get on board with that, either through the Association or directly with YCACT. YCACT is holding its consultation on April 28 in Canberra. We have been talking with the Youth Workers' Association in Victoria as well about the possibility of a common, maybe even Australia-wide Code.

In the meantime, the Committee has established an Ethics Subcommittee to guide the process and to advise on next steps. We have a draft revised Code that we will be consulting on over the next months, and hopefully coming out to the field to do ethics training and to talk about the Code with you.

**If you would like to join this subcommittee please get in touch at
info@youthworknsw.org.au**

Training

It is totally alarming that NSW has had no university-based youth work degree since the demise of the Western Sydney programme in 2013. Victoria has three, not including the faith-based programmes. We have been lobbying universities for the last year, and thankfully that is changing. The Australian Catholic University has been running youth work at the Melbourne campus for a number of years, and last year decided to extend that to their new Blacktown campus. It has enrolled its first cohort of students this semester. The startup has been modest, with limited promotion and part-time staffing, but they have actually hired a youth worker to coordinate the course in Aine McAree, and the course is good. The university just needs to be convinced that it needs to invest properly. There is no reason why it shouldn't enrol a hundred students a year if it goes for it.

Western Sydney has also been giving thought to a youth work degree, and is in advanced stages of planning, with a potential start next year. We have been consulting on that, and will give any support we can. Newcastle is interested too: they have just launched a centre for youth research, the Newcastle Youth Studies Centre. Not practitioner-focused at the moment, but they are working on it.

Professional Supervision

Professional supervision is a critical area for development of youth workers across the state. Access to proper supervision is pretty patchy though, and there are no standards in place for the quality of supervision or supervisors. We are establishing a Youth Work Supervisors group within the Association to bring together best practice, invest in the training and development of youth work supervisors, and promote professional supervision as essential particularly where pre-service training is rarely youth work specific and variable in content and quality.

Want to get involved?

We acknowledge that all Youth Work NSW members have expertise and skills to contribute and we want to make sure you have the opportunity to share those with the growth of the association. If you want to be involved, please complete the survey below.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q295>
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So that's about it.

The focus of the work has obviously been on getting things set up, so there hasn't been a lot of activity focused on you, the membership, in this first half of the year. As we gather momentum on the Code of Ethics and start turning our minds to things like continuing professional development in the sector, that will change. And maybe we can get together sometime not too far away, like, in person even!!