Connect
Number 110:
April 1998

New Generation:
Voices Into Action

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& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #5

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This Issue

The information about the New Generation Conference that I presented here in my third article has been delivered at the Youth '98 Symposium held in Melbourne. I wanted to explore a couple of issues: the first with a simplistic occupation with seeing student/youth participation as merely giving young people a voice; the second with a dangerous trend (which we've seen for so many years) towards side-stepping equity issues in student participation. These appear in the Two Challenges article in the second half of this issue and I do really want to 'editorialise' further on these themes, read the article. But I would like to hear from you about these issues - what do you think? Are you worried about these directions too?

Networking

Connect now acts to link its own network with others. As noted in the last two issues, Connect now includes the PASTA Newsletter from the Professional Association of Secondary Teacher/Advisers. And for some time, Connect has acted as the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) network on Student Participation in Curriculum. Both of these functions serve to broaden the group of readers, and to bring members of those networks into contact with others interested in such issues throughout Australia.

The ACSA network also plans to bring members together through an interactive discussion group, and this opens up some exciting possibilities for adding to the work of Connect (rather than simply replicating its information electronically). Watch for details shortly, but also let those who may be interested how you might want to use such opportunities.

Connect's 'Mission':

So, revising the Connect mission:

- to support education approaches which increase active roles of real community value for young people in schools (and elsewhere) - in classrooms, decision-making and so on;
- to document examples of such approaches in order to encourage reflection on and sharing of practice.

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #111 - June 1998
Deadline for material: end of May
During 1997, students from Laverton, Hoppers Crossing and Werribee (in Melbourne’s western suburbs) began to identify issues of concern for young people.

Fifty young people, aged between 12 and 17 years, from five secondary colleges, volunteered to be involved in the planning and delivery of a youth conference in October 1997 at Victoria University of Technology (Werribee Campus). The conference was held over a two-day period. On the first day, a junior conference was held for years 5 to 8, and on the second day, a senior conference for years 9 to 11 was held. Approximately 400 young people attended the conference over two days.

The junior conference had a different focus to the senior one. Many of the primary school students were concerned about bullying. The conference aimed at developing strategies for getting to know others, building trust and teamwork. The younger students all moved into workshops based on entertainment and recreation, transition to secondary college and the environment, facilitated by local secondary school students.

The aim of the senior conference was to reflect on and discuss issues of concern in the local community and to explore possible solutions. The issues identified were:

- employment and careers;
- education;
- racism;
- drugs and alcohol;
- families;
- mental and sexual health;
- environmental issues;
- entertainment and recreation;
- moving into secondary education.

The workshop facilitators and resource teams met after the conference to consolidate the ideas and provide the recommendations that are listed in a booklet published by the project.

The recommendations were presented to the wider community on December 9th 1997 at the Italian Social Club at Werribee. Approximately 80 people attended, including councillors, police, health workers, parents, teachers, principals and service club members.

The students presented their recommendations in a variety of formats, which were well received by the audience. Requests for a document outlining the process and the recommendations resulted in the production of a booklet.

Many of the workshop participants questioned whether the conference would lead to change. The process to date has been an exciting one but still with much to do. The Wyndham Youth Network (a monthly meeting of community agencies organised by the local council) has formally endorsed a sub-committee to explore the ways in which the recommendations could be implemented and resourced. The ideas, which still require work, are listed in the project’s booklet under ‘Follow Up’. The recommendations have provided a solid foundation in which community agencies and schools can work together. The students are continually channelling their ideas into an on-going process with many now members of local council committees to implement the recommendations.

The process of the conference, recommendations and follow-up has brought about changes for individual young people, community workers and schools. It is also a process that has the capacity to be re-evaluated, reviewed and restructured as the young people themselves begin to test their own judgements about their community.

Viv Sercombe

Adapted from the Introduction to the Project Recommendations
Glimpses of the planning ...

Planning meetings were held throughout 1997. These involved students from the various schools in the cluster working with community agency personnel and teachers.

Students formed into teams to carry out the planning and organisational tasks. As well as the workshop teams (see below), there were teams formed around Graphics, Administration, Performers, Catering and Photographers. Each team was supported by a Resource Team of teachers, community workers or tertiary students on placement.

Students were involved in all aspects of the conference organisation, including catering (Laverton and Hoppers Crossing Secondary College students), live performances (drama students from Hoppers Crossing Secondary College, the band Symbion Pandora from Westbourne Grammar), reporting, photography and designing logos and T-shirts. Here is the Graphics Meeting, with the successful logo.

Issues were identified by the students to be discussed at the conference: the environment, families, racism, entertainment, recreation, drugs, alcohol, health, education, careers, employment and transition from primary to secondary school.

Student facilitators and resource teams for each workshop were identified - here is the MOSHPIT (mental and sexual health) resource team planning its workshop.
Conference workshops were:

- SMASH (the boredom) - entertainment and recreation - "a place where bands can play for young people";
- To Use or Not To Use? - drugs and alcohol - "we need someone we can talk to and trust";
- School Sux - Let's Change It - education - "we've got to make it relevant!";
- Life After Primary School - education - "what happens if we get teased?";
- Stop, Protect, Preserve - environmental - "we've got a sewage farm and now we're getting a toxic dump!";
- Lost in Hell or on Cloud Nine: Surviving Families in the Nineties - "parents need to realise you can't stop kids from making mistakes!";
- Where's the Jobs? - careers and employment - "we need more opportunities to find work!";
- Multi-Lingual, Multi-Cultural, Multi-Cool - anti-racism - "getting left out because you're different!";
- MOSHPIT - mental and sexual health - "we need more youth workers - somewhere we can go for information".

There were also displays from local clubs at the Junior Conference, including Judo demonstrations.

...glimpses of the conference

April 1998
NEW GENERATION

Overcoming alienation

By ROSLYN GUY

"The most committed members of this generation want to have a voice in the on-going dialogue, with their opinions being seriously considered in the decision-making process... We need to involve all age groups in the co-creation of new goals for the twenty-first century, particularly the young because they bring new perspectives and have the most at stake."

— Robert Theobold in Reworking Success — New Communities at the Millennium

We all know the feeling of powerlessness that goes with being on the outer when decisions are made. At best it causes frustration. Sometimes this frustration gives way to a despair that triggers a range of personal and social problems.

For young people faced with spiralling education costs, high rates of unemployment and exclusion from the political process — at least until they gain the vote at age 18 — the sense of alienation can at times be overwhelming.

But a Werribee-based group calling themselves New Generation has shown that this doesn't have to be the outcome. They make their voices heard in their communities — and making a difference.

During the past year, hundreds of students in the City of Wyndham — from schools in Werribee, Laverton and Hoppers Crossing — have worked on developing action plans on nine issues they identified as being of concern to young people in the local community. Last week the Mayor of Wyndham, Councillor Shane Bourke, launched a booklet of their findings and recommendations.

The recommendations — many of which will be acted on through the council's youth network — came out of a conference attended by 400 students last October. Representatives of the group later met to consolidate their ideas.

Their concerns cover the gamut from employment and entertainment to education and health. And, as may be expected in a community fighting the prospect of a toxic dump in their midst, the environment is of great concern.

According to Nahdene Black, who worked on the environment strategy group, Stop, Protect, Preserve, the stigma surrounding the toxic dump and the sewage farm affects the self-esteem of young people living in Werribee. She says they "feel alienated from the decision-making processes and would like to be heard".

The desire to influence the way their world is shaped is a recurring theme. Paige Green, a year 10 student at The Grange Secondary College, says she became involved because "I might have a voice and make a difference".

Paige is a member of MOSHPIT (the mental and sexual health workshops). This group is one of several that are planning follow-up activities. Next term they will meet drama and health teachers and community health workers to begin developing a performance-based project aimed in part at improving links between community health workers and schools.

Greg Uren, a community worker with Werribee Support and Housing, says that the success of New Generation is highlighted by the number of young people who still want to be involved in implementing the recommendations. And the fact that more students are keen to join.

The project has been coordinated by VIV Sercombe, a teacher whose position is funded through the Government's Extra Edge program. The idea of Extra Edge is to provide youth services through developing relationships between schools and community agencies.

Ms Sercombe is delighted by the response to New Generation. She attributes much of this success to the involvement of young people right from the planning stage. In fact, 200 students responded to the initial calls to plan the project and came up with the issues to be tackled at the conference and beyond.

One of the striking things about this project is that it has managed to engage young people who are not normally active on student representative councils or other formal groups.

This has clearly added to the relevance of the group's work. Ms Sercombe observes that "young people who hadn't found their feet have gained enormously. They've made good friends in the networks and the growth in their confidence and self-esteem has been inspiring".

Funding for the program is expected to run out in June but those involved are committed to continuing the work. With support from Wyndham Council and local welfare agencies they want to ensure that young people continue to have a say in
A Community Worker’s Perspective

The New Generation conference set out to involve young people in an innovative, educative and participatory project. It aimed to help young people in the region learn a range of organisational and leadership skills by preparing and facilitating workshops.

The workshops themselves attempted to provide an educative forum for students to come face to face with some local and very real topics: drug misuse and mental health, racism, family conflict, inadequate recreation options, changing school life. These are issues which are central to the life of the community, and matters which can influence the extent to which the municipality is a worthwhile place to live.

New Generation has succeeded in these aims most clearly. Evidence of this is partly in (the) booklet of recommendations, but also in numbers of young people who still, want to be involved in implementing the recommendations. (Other young people heard about the conference afterwards and want to be involved in any future activity.) These young people have said a big YES to this type of learning process and their enthusiasm and interest should not be underestimated or undervalued.

The recommendations are well thought-out and valuable insights into the many themes covered in the workshops. It remains to be seen what political will and financial support can be found to carry out the ideas further, things such as creating a drop-in centre, campaigning to protect the environment, changing school curriculums to include conflict resolution, and improving access to drug education and support, to name a few.

But New Generation has also offered something more significant to all involved: a lesson that young people can take an active part in important debates in the municipality and are willing to take responsibility for dealing with problems which, directly or indirectly, affect everyone. In the launch of the recommendations, young people are recognised for their contribution and given the chance to speak to the community, council and government, about their ideas.

The launch of this booklet of ideas creates an important opportunity for council and other community leaders to respond to and encourage the

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Robert Theobold, Reworking Success - New Communities at the Millennium, 1997

young people involved and accord them the respect of listening to what they have to say. It is a most valuable lesson for any of us, but especially young adults and the next generation of members of the wider community. That is, to find that they have a part to play in resolving important issues, that their contribution will be listened to and supported, and that their efforts to be involved in the development of their own community will be valued.

Greg U'ren Youth and Parent Mediation Service Werribee Support and Housing Group
Multi-Lingual, Multi-Cultural, Multi-Coc

My name is Mark Collie. I am a year 12 student at Laverton Secondary College.

I became involved in the New Generation Conference initially through the encouragement of my Graphics teacher, Nic Fisher, who suggested I may be interested in doing the graphics for the conference. After meeting Viv, Megan and Anna, I was also asked to become involved as a facilitator for the Entertainment and Recreation workshop - SMASH. So why, you may be asking, am I speaking to you about the multi-cultural workshop today?

The reason for speaking to you today about this topic is that I strongly communicated my beliefs through my graphics logo which featured on the back of the T-shirt and now on the front of the booklet. The drawing depicts different youth cultures ... and races standing together, accepting of each others’ difference. It actually demonstrates the nature of the conference ... how we all came together for one day, talked, listened to music and had a great time. I wish life could be like this all the time. For this reason, I would like to tell you about what happened with the multi-cultural workshop ... which is also detailed in the booklet. However, it is what can be learned from the experience and where we go from here that is most important.

Four students from the various schools elected to be part of the multi-cultural workshop when they first came together in August last year. Within one week, all of them dropped out. A couple explained that they had too much homework, which was highly understandable, while the others explained that their parents did not want them involved. Three of them were from non-English speaking background and one was Anglo-Saxon. Pauline Hanson had just visited Werribee.

Megan and Viv employed Western Your People’s Independent Network to run the workshop, realising that this was a highly sensitive workshop and required experienced young facilitators to deal with the issues. Interestingly enough, Donn Nguyen from Western Young People’s Independent Network spoke about the same reluctance from the workshop participants to speak about their culture and/or past experiences of racism in the community. Essentially, the group comprised young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds with a few other young people from Anglo-Saxon background. It was during this time in the morning that the young people denied that there were any problems. By the afternoon, as people do in conferences, a few people moved into another workshop, leaving a predominantly ethnic group of young people. The young people began to open up, recalling past experiences and identifying issues and corresponding emotions.

It is still too early to provide recommendations for this issue. But it is what we can learn from this experience that ought to be the motivating factor for this community. Currently, there is a 20% non-English speaking background population in Wyndham and what we can conclude from this, I believe, is that NESB young people may feel ashamed of their
background and are desperately trying to 'blend' with other young people their own age. For us, as teenagers, there is nothing new about wanting to appear the same. However, physical differences can make conformity virtually impossible.

Maybe what we need to do is perhaps not focus on difference but provide opportunities to encourage a diverse range of young people in leadership roles in order to provide role models for other young people. Perhaps when we gain confidence through this, we will begin to celebrate difference...

I know at my age that I have been through a number of phases. In my very young years, I didn't know that I was different when I came to Australia at six years of age. But as I moved into high school, I worked very hard to reject my Filipino culture. Now I have learnt to combine my Australian/Filipino culture... We have to help our young people to appreciate their families and themselves and come to the realisation that having a bi-cultural identity is an advantage.

*Speech at the New Generation booklet launch*

### New Generation:

### Credits and Contacts:

New Generation operated with the support of the Victorian Department of Education's Extra Edge Project. Viv Sercombe, Project Officer for the Werribee/Hoppers Crossing cluster of schools produced the booklet of recommendations with assistance from student facilitators, community agency personnel and teachers from the cluster. The booklet of recommendations was edited by George King, Assistant Principal, Hoppers Crossing Secondary College.

Copies of the booklet are available from

**Hoppers Crossing Secondary College:**
**phone:** (03) 9749 3611

### Participating schools:

- Hoppers Crossing Secondary College
- Werribee Secondary College
- The Grange Secondary College
- Laverton Secondary College
- Westgrove Primary School
- Mossfield Primary School
- Glen Orden Primary School
- Thomas Chimside Primary School
- Galvin Park Secondary College
- Westbourne Grammar
- McKillop Catholic College
- WEB Project: Werribee River Supportive Education Unit

### Participating Community Agencies and Organisations:

- Wyndham City Council
- Hobsons Bay City Council
- Werribee Support and Housing - Peer and Family Mediation, Parent Resource Worker
- Anglicare - Drug and Alcohol Clinician
- Wyndham Community Health
- Centre for Young People's Mental Health
- Western Young People's Independent Network
- Small Business Research Unit - VUT (Werribee Campus)
Local and Overseas Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on:
(03) 9489 9052 or (03) 9344 9637

Australian:

Australian Youth Foundation Annual Review (AYF, East Sydney) - for 1997
Curriculum Perspectives (ACSA, Deakin West, ACT) Vol 18 No 1, April 1998
Education Alternatives (Caulfield East, Vic) Vol 7 No 1 (March 1998)
Network News (Network of Community Activities, Surry Hills, NSW) March 1998
Other Ways (Alternative Education Resource Group, Chirnside Park, Vic) Issue 75 March 1998
Rights Now! (National Children's and Youth Law Centre, NSW) Special edition; March 1998
Starlink (Extra Edge Program, DSE, Vic) Issues 24, 25; February, March 1998
YACSAround (YACSA, Adelaide, SA) March/April 1998
Youth Options (Youth Bureau, DEETYA, ACT) March 1998
Youth Research Centre Annual Report (Parkville, Vic) - for 1997
Youth Studies Australia (NCYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 17 No 1, March 1998

Overseas:

AERO-Gram (AERO, New York, USA) #23, Winter 1998
Communication Research Trends (St Louis, USA) Vol 17 (1997) No 1
Education Now (Nottingham, UK) Issue 19, Spring 1998
National Coalition News (NCACS, New Mexico, USA) Vol 22, No 4; Spring 1998

Documents

The documents listed in this column are of gene background value. A photocopy is available for resale purposes. The length and cost (to cover copying a postage) is listed. Please order by code number.

A full, computerised index of these documents now available from Connect for $3; this can be accessed and printed by topic; key-word etc or simply sequential!

Code Description/Pages/Cost

446 ACT Government Schools Student Network Workshop Report: "Strengthening and Networking Your SRC" (21-22 August 1997) (12 pp; $1.20

Highlighting Resources Available:

Connect has a very few copies left of the following Foxfire publications:

- Sometimes a Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience - Twenty Years Teaching in a Hill School Classroom (438 pp; $25 - includes postage)
- The history of Foxfire, its philosophy, underlyin; approaches and details of classes, lesson by lesson. Inspiring and informative, crammed with ideas.
- Foxfire: 25 Years: A Celebration of Our First Quarter Century (359 pp; $25 - includes postage)
- Interviews with teachers, students and community members; dynamic illustration of classroom approaches
- A Foxfire Christmas - Appalachian Memories and Traditions (170 pp hardback; $25 including postage)

Compiled by high school students, illustrating the Foxfire approach: handsome volume illustrating Christmas traditions of the area.

Friends of Connect

By subscribing at a higher rate, the following have helped keep Connect going. We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following contributions since the last issue of Connect:

Supporting Subscriber ($50 pa):
Peter Carey Lower Sandy Bay (Tas)
Australian Youth Policy and Ainslie (ACT)
Action Coalition (AYPAC) Ballarat (Vic)
Dr Helen Hayes

Connect 110:
PASS THE PASTA

The first term for PASTA has been a busy one with several of our projects up and running. The CSC Awards 2-year trial which commenced in November last year, has seen the first CSC Awards presented across Australia with over thirty Local Councils presenting their local citizens with CSC Awards as part of their 1998 Australia Day Celebrations. On the Central Coast (NSW), a CSC Awards Board has been established to supervise the overall running of the program. The Board has ten members: Professor Les Eastcott (Director and Pro-Vice Chancellor, Newcastle University, Central Coast Campus), Professor Frank Clarke (Dean of Studies, Newcastle University, Central Coast Campus), Mr Ralph Murray (Founder and Manager, CSC Awards Program), Ms Julie Becker (Executive Officer, Newcastle University, Central Coast Campus), Mr Paul Davis (Director, Community College, Newcastle University, Central Coast Campus), Mr Ken Page (Chairperson, Central Coast District, CSC Awards Committee, Gorrokan High School), Mr Chris Holstein (Mayor, Gosford City Council), Ms Fay Brennan (Mayor, Wyong Shire Council), and two student representatives, one from the Newcastle University, Central Coast Campus and the other from the Central Coast District SRC. Ken Page is also the 1998 USA SRC Tour Organiser and is to be congratulated on the successful launch of this year’s tour. Arrangements are also under way for the 1999 tour to Minnesota.

In New South Wales, PASTA has initiated two in-services, one in secondary and one in primary to lift the profile of SRCs and their SRC Advisers. Members of the NSW P&C participated and are currently amending their guidelines to lift their previous support for SRCs and have called for the independence of SRCs to be respected. In Victoria and Tasmania, PASTA has helped to initiate the establishment of steering committees to form State SRC structures. Our congratulations are extended to Ross Appleby (VIC) and Kim Roberts (TAS) on this historical achievement. It’s wonderful what can be gained from co-operative efforts in support of student representation and leadership.

1999 USA TOUR

Plans are now under way for the second USA leadership tour to be held in June/July, 1999. The 1999 Conference will be held at Roseville, Minnesota. Interested Students/Staff should contact the tour organiser Ken Page on 02 4396 6485 or Fax 02 4393 1157.
Plans for the USA tour are now starting to become more concrete. Of the fifty-three students who have applied, thirty-one are still trying hard to raise the necessary fund to go on this once in a lifetime trip. Why do they wish to travel so far across the sea?

Tamara Anderson (Moorebank HS in NSW) - has been a representative of both the NSW SRC and Working Party and has been heavily involved in her school SRC activities as one of two student representatives on her school's School Council. She feels that the experience and knowledge she gains from this trip will allow her to be better able to contribute as she continues with her involvement with leadership both while at school and after she leaves.

Luke Berman (Wollongong HS, NSW) - considers that being part of this tour will give him ways in which he can improve his decision making skills that will allow him to make a greater contribution to the various committees with which he is currently associated.

Aida Bunyan (Kogarah HS, NSW) - attended NASPAC IV in Sydney, and feels that this trip would give her skills that will not only benefit her school but also the wider community with which she is involved.

Shane Butcher (Bidwell HS, NSW) - was recently awarded the 1997 Minister's Award for Excellence in Education and feels that this trip will enable him to further develop his leadership skills as well as form valuable networks with the other students and staff involved.

David Carter (Bairnsdale Secondary College, Vic) - is active in a number of areas that involve youth leadership and sees this trip as giving him skills that would increase his ability to work more effectively in the various organisations with which he is involved.

Tracey Dovey (Gorokan HS, NSW) - has represented her District and sees this trip as a way for her to gain knowledge that would help her to assist her SRC to become a more effective body within her school.

Carlin Drew (Karingal Park Secondary College, Vic) - attended NASPAC IV in Sydney and is currently part of the team helping to organise a State SRC for Victoria. Carlin would love to have an opportunity to further expand on the knowledge and skills she has already gained.

Rebekah Donders (Albury HS, NSW) - is excited about the opportunities this trip will give her and the way in which she will be able to use this information to assist her home town.

Lea Elkin (Henry Kendall HS, NSW) - has represented her District for two years and is currently on the NSW State Working Party. Lea feels that this trip would enable her to learn so much about how the SRCs in other countries work.

Monique Field (Bathurst HS, NSW) - sees this trip as a great way to learn about the ways in which different schools and SRCs operate and hopes that she will be able to use this information to help improve her school through SRC activities.

Michelle Filippig (Warrawong HS, NSW) - hopes that the knowledge and skills she gains from this trip will give her a chance to practice different methods of processing information that will assist her in any future leadership role with which she may be involved.

Rebecca Fry (Bathurst HS, NSW) - has been in her school SRC for the past three years and believes that this trip would be a great learning experience in the area of student leadership.

Heidi Gleeson (Ballina HS, NSW) - feels that as a member of the NSW SRC the experiences gained from this trip would not only benefit her greatly but that her ability as a public speaker would allow her to pass on these experiences to other students.

Hollie Gravener (Bairnsdale Secondary College, Vic) - has attended a number of youth forums in Melbourne as well as NASPAC IV. Hollie feels selection for this trip to be both an honour and a privilege.

Paul Habashy (Hurstville Boys HS, NSW) - is a member of the NSW SRC and hopes that this trip will enable him to learn new skills that will benefit both himself and those he represents at all levels.

Jody Hart (Kelvin Grove State HS, Qld) - is a student of a school that has been identified as a model for student participation in decision making. Jody hopes that the experiences she gains assist her in providing greater opportunities for students to be involved in this area of student leadership.

Fiona Mates (Seven Hills HS, NSW) - feels that it would be an experience not to be missed as it would give her an opportunity to compare how SRCs are able to operate in other parts of the world.
Mr Keown (Bathurst HS, NSW) - sees this trip as providing an ideal opportunity to acquire leadership skills that would allow her to assist SRCs to operate at their full potential.

Michael McQueen (Figtree HS, NSW) - is interested in finding solutions to the many problems faced by the youth of today and sees this trip as a way in which he can gain a different perspective which would assist him in the future.

Hayley McRae (Quakers Hill HS, NSW) - represents her district on the NSW SRC. Hayley considers it important that students achieve all that they set out to do and that his trip would be an important way of helping her achieve her goals.

Nathan Murray (Terrigal HS, NSW) - feels the opportunity to participate in the operation of a large scale conference will be helpful to him as a musical student majoring in technical production and design and assist our own conference in 2000.

Jenny Nam (Sydney Girls HS, NSW) - has been involved with her SRC for a number of years and feels that this tour would round off her experiences and make her a more effective representative of the groups she is currently involved with.

Sarah Perry (Lake Macquarie HS, NSW) - was a member of the State Working Party and is now a member of the NSW SRC. Sarah feels that the skills she has learnt in these positions would be of benefit to the tour.

Jay Ryan (Walgett HS, NSW) - has been a member of his school's SRC for five years and sees this trip as a way for him to improve the qualities he already possesses by providing him with a greater understanding of how other people feel about their problems.

James Saivanidis (Randwick Boys HS, NSW) - has been a representative at all levels of the NSW SRC and sees this as an extension of his already considerable involvement.

Ashley Sheehan (Asquith Girls HS, NSW) - is excited to be involved and sees it as an opportunity to gain in knowledge of leadership skills and SRCs which will enable her to better help the various groups with which she is involved.

Catherine Suttor (Bathurst HS, NSW) - is interested in finding out more about a culture that is different to ours. Catherine hopes to give all those she meets a good impression of both her school and country.

Kylie Vassallo (Seven Hills HS, NSW) - intends to use the knowledge gained from this trip to help improve her school, district, and state SRCs.

Cherie Wilson (The Forest HS, NSW) - feels that to be able to attend the 1998 American leadership conference would be an true honour as she believes that she has what it takes to be a great ambassador for our country.

Natalie Weddell (Canberra HS, ACT) - as a member of her School Board and the only ACT representative, feels this trip would provide a wealth of information for her to help her school and Territory improve SRC involvement in decision-making.

Stephanie Young (Bathurst HS, NSW) - has been an active member of her school SRC for three years and feels that this trip would provide her with unique skills to assist her as a leader in her school.

In October 2000 - between the Sydney Summer Olympics and the Paralympics which follow - PASTA is organising the first International SRC Conference. Our aim is to attract as many secondary student leaders and advisers as our sponsorship and venues will allow. Our maximum aim is of course for 2000 participants to match the many year 2000 Olympic celebrations around Australia.

Creating an International SRC Olympiad

We hope you are interested in this exciting project. If you are, please photocopy the back of this PASTA insert and distribute a dozen or a score or hundreds of these to your peers, colleagues, business associates and contacts throughout Australia and the world. Help us to help you be proud that our country is behind this major cultural Olympic year event.

Take Part in Planning Your Future

Send your completed copy to us so we can move ahead and keep you involved in the project. If you want to really show your interest fill out all of the next page and become a member of both PASTA and the 2000 Conference Committee.
RETURN TO:
5. Other (e.g. venue, caterer, transport, loans) ________
4. Workshop topics: ________
3. Keynote speakers and/or panelists: ________
2. Publicity and promotional material: ________
1. A possible theme and/or logo: ________

A. Attached are four ideas on:

Conference
4. Helping to sponsor this international conference
3. Being on the Conference Steering Committee
2. Making a presentation at the Conference
1. Attending the SFC 2000 International

B. I am / We are interested in: (tick all that apply to you):

Phone: __________________________
E-mail (if available): __________________________
Fax: __________________________
Phone number: __________________________
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School/Business Address: __________________________
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Family or Institutional Name: __________________________
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I enclose a cheque for $______ payable to PASTA Inc.

Membership:
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NSW Department of School Education
Employing Authority

Area of particular interest: Primary Secondary Tertiary Other (please specify)
TWO CHALLENGES

When asked why student participation is important, students - and others - frequently cite the value of students “having a voice ... we should listen to young people”. This can be a limited concept; moving beyond it presents two challenges for the late 1990s.

Beyond Voice ...

There continue to be many school- and community-based forums across Australia, that are set up to allow young people to ‘speak out’ on issues that affect them. They argue that the voice of young people has been excluded from consideration, that young people are an important part of our community, and that their ideas should be heard.

However, a simple focus on ‘being heard’ can merely serve to make it appear that young people are active participants; it may, in fact, serve as a ‘safety valve’ to ease pressure for real changes in decision making (that would include young people in real, valued roles in our community), or as a way of making the decision-makers feel as if they are ‘doing the right thing’.

Some recent forums have realised the limitations on ‘youth voice’ and are explicitly making bridges from the concept of ‘voice’ to ideas of ‘agency’ or ‘action’. For example, a series of forums was held in the Goulburn North-Eastern Region of Victoria in 1997 under the title ‘Teenroar’ - a title chosen by students from the area. In 1998, one forum has already been held in the area under the new title ‘Teenaction’ (a report will be included in the next issue of Connect) and a facilitator, Jan Osmotherly, writes in the invitation:

The idea is to build on what we know and rather than just ‘roar’ - ‘act’ on implementation of programs which will positively address relevant issues in the youth culture.

Similarly, the students and support workers involved with the New Generation Conferences (highlighted elsewhere in this issue of Connect) have stressed the importance of the presentation of student recommendations, of a follow-through to serious consideration, and of the inclusion of students in action outcomes.

For many years, the concept of a community ‘participation ladder’ has been useful, in which ideas of ‘consultation’ and ‘involvement’ are seen as distinct from (and more limited than) ‘participation’ and ‘action’. In a similar way, it is possible to distinguish between views of ‘youth/student voice’ and characterise them as stages on the way to the real inclusion of young people in their communities:

| youth/student voice: ‘speaking out’ |
| being heard |
| being listened to |
| being listened to seriously and with respect (including a willingness to argue with students with logic and evidence) |
| incorporating youth/student views into action taken by others |
| sharing decisions, implementation of action and reflection on the action, with young people |

So, in the follow-up to the New Generation Conference, it is important to note the formal procedures that were implemented to present the recommendations to local government and other bodies (the booklet of recommendations was launched by the Mayor of Wyndham), and the responses in which these recommendations have been included in the agenda of local bodies and committees. The challenge will now be for the young people involved in this Conference to continue their involvement to the stages of acting (with others) on these issues.

Elsewhere (Connect 104, April 1997, pp 17-21) this development has been seen as a move from ‘youth voice’ to ‘youth agency’ ie towards an increase in the capacity and willingness of young people to act upon issues that affect them. This both recognises that young people already have this capacity and willingness (ie they have agency) but these have been
diminished by approaches in which, as James Coleman noted over 25 years ago:

(students) are shielded from responsibility, and they become irresponsible; they are held in a dependent status and they come to act as dependents; they are kept away from productive work and they become unproductive. (Coleman, 1972)

While it is important to re-focus on issues of youth and student agency (rather than simply on voice), it should also be noted that such concepts are more located within a dimension of the individual or personal development of young people. There is also the necessity for real opportunities for young people to act; this structural dimension must sit alongside the personal one. Ideas of youth and student participation have attempted to make this distinction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>youth/student voice</th>
<th>youth/student forums</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>youth/student agency</td>
<td>youth/student participation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In working with Student Representative Councils in both primary and secondary schools, I have become aware of the importance of recognising ‘how’ students work. The characterisation of this (Connect 75, June 1992, pp 8-9) as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Ask</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

has been a simple and useful one to explore with students and their teachers.

In this, it is recognised that while there are some things that SRCs can do (by themselves), these tend to be relatively trivial in most cases, and trap SRCs into exclusively fund-raising and social roles; while there are some things that SRCs will need to ask others to do (making requests or demands), these (usually more important issues) tend to lead to (sometimes unaccountable) rejection and to reinforcement of students’ powerlessness. While it is also recognised that the capacity and willingness to both ‘do’ and ‘ask’ is important for the individual development of students’ agency, the more important structural challenge has been to encourage a movement towards the ‘share’ role in which students (as other parties do) work with others to the development of accountable decision-making partnerships.

At the moment, however, with very few exceptions, students (and young people in general) remain locked out of such partnerships, relegating to asking, encouraged to have a ‘voice’ (perhaps, but no more. For example, in Victoria, the change to School Council Regulations in the early 1990s omitted student representation - though statutory requirements for secondary schools had previously existed for the past decade. (So schools continue to co-opt student representation their School Councils.)

What is now the connection between student youth forums (SRCs, JSCs, student/you conferences and so on), and the school/community decision-making structures, that would enable young people to share in decisions and take action in regard to their lives? How can we applaud your people ‘being heard’ if a response doesn’t exist?

2. Whose Voice?

Robert Theobold (quoted by the NE1 Generation Conference organisers) reports that “the most committed members of this generation want to have a voice in the on-going dialogue” (my emphasis), while a press report on the process of the Conference notes that

one of the striking things about this project is that it has managed to engage young people who are not normally active on student representative councils or other formal groups. (Guy, 1998)

This is reinforced by recent research at the Youth Research Centre (University of Melbourne) in which young people alienated by schooling were highly disparaging of SRCs, seeing them as neither effective nor as representing them.

There has been a disturbing trend for some time to move attention from participation to representation and then to leadership - and to focus upon developing the skills of the few students elected or appointed to elite positions. Similarly, while curriculum programs such as cross-age tutoring have traditionally been inclusive (and even provided alternative positions of responsibility and value to those students otherwise excluded and marginalised) there has been a similar degradation of such programs in favour of the already advantaged students ‘who will best represent the school’. The loss of equity criteria is alarming.

Whose voices are being heard? Those who speak most coherently? Those with whom we most readily agree?

In classroom programs, and in forums for enabling students to ‘enact their voices’, we need to ensure that all voices are heard and that all students are enabled to walk the bridge from voice to action. That will mean taking particular measures to
overcome the legacies of silence and inactivity that have traditionally and particularly locked some students out.

Can existing SRC structures encompass this? We may need to look at other forms that encourage real and valued action, over those that simply enable representation. This provoked some (mainly informal) debate at the National Student Participation and Australian Curriculum Studies Association Conferences in Sydney last year. Some students reported on ‘open’ membership of SRCs in which any student could be a voluntary member; others talked of anyone being on the SRC if they could get ten signatures. Such measures avoid the creation of a ‘popularity contest’ in which students who are already verbally or organisationally proficient are elected (future training for the ‘numbers game’ of parliamentary democracy?), irrespective of their commitment to broader participation. Other ideas canvassed included extending support to the formation of student action groups around specific on-going issues, and the coordination of these by a student executive with a representative from each group.

Such alternative approaches need obvious development and exploration, but could be appropriate for specific circumstances. Connect would love to hear of the experiences of schools which are trying any alternative approaches to ensure that otherwise silent or excluded voices are heard and linked to real decision making.

In the past, I have, for the above reasons, been more interested to initiate, support and (through Connect) document student participation in classroom or curriculum approaches. My own experiences with:

- cross-age tutoring programs, in which marginalised students were given valued and recognised roles as teachers; or
- community media, in which marginalised students influenced their communities through the production of newspapers, radio programs, television, community resource directories or internet services; or
- community research, in which marginalised students presented the results of real, valuable and insightful studies (on homelessness, train stations, truancy and so on) to policy bodies;

convinced me that such examples of participation can more effectively target and overcome the forces that differentially exclude the voice and action of some students.

But even here, as noted above, it is necessary to be vigilant against tendencies to co-opt such programs and see them as disposable ‘add-ons’ or as only accessible to already successful students. It is imperative that we keep a focus on the ‘main game’ of participation for all young people:

they must be of the society - participants, not recipients. That is the crux of any theory of valuing youth. (Pearl et al, 1978)

Roger Holdsworth

References
Coleman, J (1972) How Do the Young Become Adults?, Center for Social Organisation of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; Report No. 130, May
Pearl, A, Grant, D and Wenk, E (eds) (1978) The Value of Youth, Responsible Action, Davis, California
Theobold, R (1997) Reworking Success - New Communities at the Millenium, New Society

(Paper at Youth '98 Conference, Melbourne, April 16-19, 1998)

SRC American Tour 1999

PASTA is hosting a trip to the 1999 US National Student Council Conference, to be held in Roseville, Minnesota in June 1999. In addition to attending this national US student conference, students will attend a National Student Leadership Camp to be held at one of various venues across mid-USA. This tour will afford students the opportunity to travel with other student leaders from various states of Australia and to attend a conference of approximately 2000 US SRC students. The leadership training received will put them in good stead both to assist the SRC leadership in Australia, as well as preparing them for their future leadership role in the wider community. Participating students would be expected to pass on their experiences through any available avenues to their schools, districts or state conferences. A delegation will be selected to report to the 5th NASPAC conference to be held in 1999.

At this stage, preliminary costs are:

- return airfare/travel: (Syd-LA-Minnesota) $3900
- conference and camp registration $1000
- accommodation and general expenses (inc travel within USA) $2000

Total Cost (not including spending money): $6000

Interested students, as representatives of their school, district, state or nation, could consider fund-raising and sponsorship to offset the cost of this exciting experience.

The tour will be fully supervised by experienced SRC teacher advisers.

Students will need to apply in writing on the official application form, giving reasons why they should be selected to represent their country on this tour. Applications will need to be accompanied by a supporting statement signed by the Principal or his/her designated representatives.

The final date for acceptance of applications will be Friday 14 August, 1998. Successful applicants will be notified by Friday 4 September 1998.

Application forms may be obtained by contacting:
Ken Page, 12 Dyson Dr, Norah Head NSW 2263
Phone: (02) 4396 6485; Fax: (02) 4393 1157

April 1998
SEVEN THOUSAND HEADS HAVE TO BE BETTER THAN ONE...

In year 8 of High School I decided to take control of my schooling and join the Student Representative Council. Sure, High School SRCs aren't always renowned for world changing decisions but High School did prepare me for what I was about to experience in College, the place in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) where Student Representative Councils take on a new-found power and responsibility for their fellow students (maybe they need an SRC on the Waterfront??).

In College my involvement in SRCs took me into a new phase of student leadership - one which had myself and my SRC friends involved in some of the biggest events in Australia for young people: the Australia Youth Forum, Youth Parliament for the Environment, the National Schools Constitutional Convention - I think you get the idea. However, my College was no different to any other school in Canberra. Same people, same experiences, same energy and passion toward their SRCs.

Through my involvement in Student Representative Councils in High Schools and then in College, I noticed one rather frustrating fact. My College, Lake Tuggeranong College, was not only isolated way down in the Tuggeranong Valley but was also isolated from other schools' SRCs, not by distance, but by the lack of resources and structures needed to communicate with other schools. All those good ideas and no-one to share them with.

Time has now passed and I've graduated from College. Tackled my fears of year 12 and passed the reins of the SRC to the next generation of 'future leaders'. But one problem still exists: how to relate to the other schools and share in and combine with them the talents that every school possesses. Was it said that two heads are better than one... or does this apply to 7000 heads being better than one?

This is the story (or should I say ongoing saga of how I, with the help of many others, plan to set up an Australian Capital Territory Student Representative Council. Be it the right or wrong way I'd love to know. So please read it, tear it into bits, use it in the bottom of your cat's kitty litter box or to line the bottom of your pet bird's cage but whatever you do please give me some feedback - that's the whole principle: to work together to get the best outcome from students in school everywhere (really prophetic huh??!!). Enjoy....

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AN AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

Draft Proposal

1. Introduction

In the ACT Government school system, there are approximately 28 secondary high schools and colleges. To increase opportunities for positive learning and personal development for the students within these schools, student participation is widely encouraged. Student participation within schools can come in many forms, from having students more involved in their academic studies to a furthered encouragement in sporting endeavours. One vitally important area of student participation comes in the area of school/student governance: getting students more involved in the decision making that takes place in their own schools. Once students take a more active role within their schools, improvements can come in many different ways, from a safer school environment to a greater responsibility for themselves and their peers. Students will learn to value themselves more when they can see others valuing them and when their opinions are counted.

2. The Role of the Student Representative Council in the ACT Secondary School

Each school has its own very unique student body whose needs may change from year to year. The role of a Student Representative Council in an ACT Secondary School is a varied and ever-
ranging one which is defined and shaped by the needs of this student body. The main role of an SRC in a secondary school in the ACT is to act as a representative body of students within the school that can deal with issues that confront students, school governance (which may include school policy and curriculum issues), and the role in which the student body operates in the wider community. 

There is no one model which each school can form its own SRC around; however, a number of schools have adopted similar techniques with which to deal with student matters. A crucial part of any SRC is to act as a body with which both students and staff (including principals) can communicate the feelings of the school and ultimately act as the group which can effectively deal with the issues that are presented to them. There are far ranging benefits for all that are involved with the school’s SRC, including the students that are involved, the students that aren’t, teachers, principals and even the parents of the students that attend the school. Any student that has been on, or had involvement with, an SRC during any time of their secondary education will testify to their importance within the school structure.

3. What support for the Student Representative Councils and their members currently exist within the ACT school system?

As previously outlined, individual schools operate their Student Councils differently. This may depend on those involved in the views of individual students and teachers or the views of the school’s principal. The operation of the SRC may also depend on how it was done or how the school’s first SRC was formed when the school was opened. Regardless of how it runs, the students still need the same amount of support from those around them to operate in a suitable manner.

**Internal Support (Within Schools)**

Within schools, SRcs receive support from both the student and staff body. From staff, this can come in the way of credit toward grades, allowances for the workload that students with multiple roles have and consideration for the equal importance that SRC activities have in the personal development of the student. From students, the SRC can receive support in the way of students volunteering for SRC activities although they may not formally be part of the council. Students also attend the many varied functions and events that the council may stage.

**External Support (Outside of schools)**

Outside of the High School or College, SRcs receive and give support to many community organisations, youth projects and local and national charity groups. These links not only promote the school as a positive contributor to the community but provide access to opportunities not otherwise available within a school environment. From the Department of Education (up until now) SRcs haven’t received any formal ongoing support for their individual Student Representative Councils apart from the Student Network Meetings, which are run for the benefit of the Department to gauge student involvement and reaction toward department matters such as the formation of school based policy (eg school based management, sexual harassment). The Department also runs SRC training days annually to help the Councils form in the early stages of the school year and set them in the right direction.

**Joint SRC Support across High Schools and Colleges**

Currently there is no formal system in place for High Schools or Colleges that allows schools’ respective SRcs to support each other (whether it be high school to high school or college to high school etc). This is not to say it doesn’t occur and schools which have initiated across-school SRC communication have found the ‘operation’ quite a successful one, benefiting all of those involved.

4. The forming of an ACT-wide Student Representative Council

In 1996 and 1997 there was an expression of interest from those students who were involved in Student Network meetings (including SRC representatives and School board members) that they would like to see a territory wide body of students formed to fill the need of ‘across schools’ student communication that was currently lacking from the ACT school system. This idea was left untouched until early 1998 when again the issue came to the fore. At the first Student Network meeting of 1998 in March, students from both the Northside and Southsides of Canberra unanimously placed their support behind the idea of an ACT SRC when it was put to them. It was expressed that a body such as this could provide benefits in a wide range of areas. The students also expressed the need for this body to be established as soon as possible to help them for this school year.

5. The roles of an ACT SRC and the Student Network

During the discussions with students, one area of discussion that was raised was: “What are the differences between the proposed model for the ACT SRC and the
**The Student Network**

As previously outlined, the Student Network is a Department of Education tool for hearing concerns and informing students of the ongoing work of the Department and its various roles. Students were very open to the information and were more often than not interested in what took place at these monthly meetings. Being invited to be involved in the workings of the Department was seen as not only interesting and informative but also constructive and beneficial to student participation in the school system as a whole. Benefits for the Department are that they get to know directly from the students attitudes toward certain Departmental procedures and policies that are in place. The network also provides an avenue where students can become involved in Department committees that affect students eg drug policy committee.

**The ACT Student Representative Council**

This would be a body of students which meet on a regular basis (eg fortnightly) to discuss student issues that are occurring within schools. These discussions would have the aim of gaining help or support from other schools in the ACT who might have been in the same position and knew of strategies on how to best deal with it. Also with these meetings SRCs from High Schools and Colleges can ‘swap’ ideas on what they are doing in their schools and how it has helped them, working toward a common goal of improving student participation and school life for the students, their peers and colleagues.

The main difference between network meetings and the proposed ACT SRC meetings is that the students would initiate discussion on school specific student issues. These meetings would be organised by an independent facilitator who could regularly report back to the Department and assist students with resources and other aspects required for the successful running of such organisation. Guests from the Department of Education would be invited to meetings when the need arose but Department matters would not form the basis for discussion. The model of this can be seen below:

6. **Who would be involved with the ACT SRC?**

The aim of the Council is for it to be made up entirely of secondary school students and to bring their experience and skills to the ACT SRC. It is hoped that these students can (through this Council) further strengthen links between schools, the Department of Education and also their community. Community and youth groups can play a vital role in linking the students to services in the community and can also play a role in assisting the students on the Council with issues that affect young people on a wider scale (eg drug education).

7. **The main aims of the Council**

The main aim of the Council would be to ‘create a greater awareness and respect of students’ rights and voices within schools relating to decision making, student leadership, active student participation and in shaping the culture of their school and local community’. This would be achieved by the students developing an individual responsibility for their role in the school and developing their skills to perform their duties successfully.

This Council would also aim to further develop the relationships between students and staff (teachers and principals) with the goal of both students and staff being more aware of what ‘student leaders’ can achieve within schools. The resulting effect would hopefully be one of leading more teachers to be more understanding and supportive of Student Representative Councils within schools and the integral part they play in the ‘successful school model’. This levelled respect between students and teachers will encourage more students to have a say in determining the outcomes from their education, in what direction they want to be headed as individuals (regardless of academic ability, gender or race).
How the Council would be structured

The Council would be structured so as not to be exclusive but inclusive - involving as many students as possible but in a way that promotes manageable discussion and successful and positive outcomes. The Council would form as shown basically below:

**THE COUNCIL STRUCTURE**

**COLLEGES**
(Twice monthly meetings)

- Report back to schools
  (Twice monthly)

- Joint Bi-Monthly Meetings

- Fortnightly report to Department of Education

**HIGH SCHOOLS**
(Twice monthly meetings)

From the fortnightly and bi-monthly meetings it is proposed that a newsletter be published with the ideas that came from the meetings, issues that were put forth and solutions to problems. This newsletter could be distributed to students in all the schools to help with the Student Council matters. Also there is also an aim to produce a book at the end of the year which will double as a year book for the Council compiling what went on in regards to certain matters and also act as a resource manual for students and teachers to use when setting up the following year's Councils - 1999 and beyond.

9. Initial funding for the Council

For the successful operation of this Council, it would require a certain level of funding and resources for both the set up stage and right through its development (until a point where it may become self sufficient to a certain degree). It is proposed that the Department be the source of this funding and the cost can be absorbed into one of their student participation programs. The funding and resources that are needed are as follows:

1. The allocation of funding for an independent facilitator (non-student): This may come in the form of a grant or a salaried position for the duration of the school year. This person would provide regular feedback to the Department on where the ACT SRC was heading and also provides reports on the strengths and weaknesses of the council. This person will administer the day to day affairs of the Council, co-ordinate any correspondence, compile and publish the newsletters and be the contact point for all Council members with information on meetings times, places, agendas. The role is seen as non-student as there would not be allowances for such a time consuming position in a student's timetable (be it part or full time). This person would be a 'silent' member of the Council.

2. Meeting places: There will need to be provision for the possible hire of meeting places if other suitable venues such as schools or the Department are unavailable. Also travelling allowances would be included in this cost.

3. Resources:
   - office supplies - Stationery, Envelopes, Stamps, Paper etc
   - access to a Computer, Printer, Photocopier
   - a Post Office Box or mailing address
   - an independent E-mail address

   *Other unforeseen/uncalculated expenses have not be costed into this plan.*

10. The next step for the ACT Student Representative Council

The next step for the ACT SRC is for this proposal to be submitted to the ACT Department of Education and then a time given for consultation to be sought on the draft proposal. Copies will be sent to students, teachers and principals in schools in the ACT and a time given for comment on the draft. Once this step has been completed all modifications will be made and a formalised proposal put into place. The aim is to have the ACT SRC in operation by early May 1998.
News and Reviews

An Anti-Violence Kit for Students by Students

Establishing the issue:

In 1994, students from the St George District Student Representative Council (SRC) attended an anti-violence conference organised by Riverina Regional SRC at Wagga Wagga NSW. This set the agenda for these students to conduct a survey on the incidence of violence in secondary schools in the Metropolitan East Region of Sydney. The survey clearly showed that sexual harassment and conflict, including bullying, discrimination, and racism, were some of the facets of violence experienced by students.

Raising awareness:

The St George District SRC formed an Action Group to raise awareness of alternatives to violence. The aims of the Anti-Violence Action Group were:

- To enable students themselves to become actively involved in matters affecting their welfare;
- To conduct a one day conference on violence in schools for student leaders representing each high school in the Region. To obtain student input in the preparation and presentation of appropriate workshop material through a program devised by students for students whilst also calling upon Departmental or external experts or resources for advice/input;
- To defined violence in a way that is understood by students;
- To provide an opportunity for student representatives to become informed about the nature, causes and incidence of violence in schools and strategies for coping with and/or overcoming the problems;
- To encourage students to return to their schools and SRC Associations with Action Plans developed by them at the Conference which could be implemented with a view to extending the culture of non-violence within high schools so that they can become 'happier and safer' environments for learning for all students;
- To work to develop within schools a climate of tolerance and understanding so that all students, whatever their differences (eg sex, culture or ethnicity) can learn in an environment free from harassment or discrimination.

Planning:

Many students and staff were involved in the planning, preparation, and execution of a one day conference to Raise Awareness of the Alternatives to Violence. The conference committee spent many afternoons after school sorting and editing workshop material, discussing and planning the conference with the help of SRC Teacher Advisers and Department of School Education Staff and Student Welfare advisers. The students encouraged other students at the St George Schools Association meetings to get involved, and eventually committee members represented schools from seven Metropolitan East SRC Associations. They developed a program for a conference on alternatives to violence workshops on Sexual Harassment and Conflict Resolution. Specialists from the Department of School Education and specialist community groups were invited to provide workshops on Gender Equity, Bullying, Homophobia, and Cultural Difference.

Planning highlights included:

- A call for committee membership and expressions of interest at the Metropolitan East Annual Conference in March 1994;
- Attendance by four students at the Riverina Region SRC Conference, Wagga Wagga on Violence in School in August 1994;
- Amalgamation of Anti-Violence and Welfare Action Groups to focus on planning and organising a 199 anti-violence conference;
- Successful participation in the Anti-Racism Campaign Conference held during “Different Colours, On People Week”, August 1994;
- Surveying Metropolitan East high schools via their SRC to determine the extent and nature of violence within schools (November ’94 – February ’95), as an aid to choosing appropriate conference topics;
- Regular action group meetings (at first within school hours and then after hours); attendance of four students at a weekend Basic Workshop conducted by the Alternative to Violence Project in late March 1995

The Conference:

Overall, the conference held in May 1995 ran smoothly and had a good tone due to the co-operation of all concerned and the teamwork of the committee. It was attended by 128 students from 42 High Schools in Sydney Metropolitan East Region, 19 teaching staff, mostly Student Representative Council Advisers, and 26 distinguished visitors many of whom contributed to the success of the day. The students were encouraged by the then Assistant Director General Metropolitan East Region and the Principal of Kogarah High School.

On the financial side, all conference costs, plus the anticipated cost of printing and distributing conference papers, were covered from registration fees, District Anti-Violence funds, an allocation from Regional Office, and the St George SRC Association Special Projects Fund.
Solving the Problem of Violence in Schools:

The Anti-Violence Committee recognised it had to publish its work by distributing conference papers to participating schools, which it did through the Regional and State SRC Networks. Students recognised that violence in schools is a complex issue and that the conference had gone a long way towards achieving their aims. So they resolved to put all the good ideas together and develop an Anti-Violence Kit using the butchers paper writings generated by students at the Conference on Raising Awareness of Alternatives to Violence, as well as selected items from resources provided by guest speakers and specialist presenters. The SRC Teacher Adviser typed the text, the school ancillary staff printed and collated the booklets, while students from year 10 and year 11 Science or Life classes assembled eleven modules into kits.

What the Kit contains:

1. How to use the kit
2. Editorial
3. Credits
4. What is Violence?
5. Alternatives to Violence
6. Expectations in schools

Modules

1. Sexual Harassment
2. Conflict Resolution
3. Anti Racism
4. Bullying
5. Combating Homophobia
6. Valuing Difference
7. Gender Equity
8. Turning Talk Into Action

Taking it further

9. Holding a Youth Forum
10. More Information
11. Workshops

Where to now?

In 1997, students from the SRC Anti-Violence Action Group presented the Anti-Violence Kit at a conference of the NSW Joint Council of Professional Teachers’ Associations, at the 4th National Student Participation Conference held at Sydney University in July 1997 and to the Australian Curriculum Studies Association Biennial Conference. It has also been promoted successfully through the SRC networks. The Anti-Violence Kit, by students for students, has been purchased by more than 80 schools and SRC Associations throughout New South Wales. Sale of the kits recovered the cost of production and also provided a small profit for the St George District SRC Association.

Together we can make a difference

Students and staff believe that Student Representative Councils can make a significant reduction to the levels of violence, vandalism and graffiti in schools by:

- providing a community service to students;
- through student leadership in matters of student interest;
- through representation on school committees and collaboration with staff which promotes a positive school climate and mutual respect. It's a shared approach to building a learning community through staff and student welfare.

Be encouraged by this account of the participation and hard work of many students from Kogarah High, the St George District SRC, and other schools in the Metropolitan East Region of Sydney who demonstrated positive commitment to student representation and participation and who have now graduated from school. This is not the end. Opportunities for student participation continue through the Professional Association of SRC Teacher Advisers (PASTA) which supports Teacher Advisers and the Australian student leadership movement in schools, districts, nationally and internationally. Why not join PASTA now?

Jeanne Bow BSc, Dip Ed.
PASTA Committee - Special Projects

National Youth Forum

A National Youth Forum will be held this year from 21st to 25th September on Raymond Island, East Gippsland, Victoria. There are limited places available.

Enquiries to Liesel Collings on:
(03) 5155 7217 (after hours)
or by e-mail to: <diesel@b150.aone.net.au>

AYF International Youth Exchange Program

A joint initiative of the Australian Youth Foundation (AYF) and the Myer Foundation, and operating for the first time in 1998, this program will enable four to six young Australians (aged 15 to 25 years) to travel overseas to participate in international community projects. It is designed specifically for young people who have direct experience of disadvantage (in 1998 it focuses on homelessness) and who want to build on their strengths to develop positions of respect and leadership in the community.

Applications for the 1998 visit (to the Philippines) may have closed, but further details of this year’s programs and for advance notice of 1999’s program, contact the AYF on (02) 9357 2344 or at <youth@ayf.org.au>
Copy or use this form to subscribe to Connect and to order materials from Connect:

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Miscellaneous Resources:

- Students and Work - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 ($5) $ ...........
- Democratic Decision Making in Schools - Victorian PEP (1987) ($3) $ ...........
- SRC Pamphlets Set (6 pamphlets; Youth Affairs Council of Vic) ($5) $ ...........
- Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work (1996) ($7) $ ...........

Foxfire Resources:

- Sometimes a Shining Moment (Wigginton) ($25) $ ...........
- Foxfire 9 (Doubleday Anchor) ($25) $ ...........
- Foxfire: 25 Years (Doubleday) ($25) $ ...........
- A Foxfire Christmas (Doubleday hardcover) ($25) $ ...........
- Shining Moments - Foxfire video (1 hour) (loan for 1 week: $5) $ ...........

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